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DEADMAN'S CREATOR--
ARNOLD DRAKE
SPILLS THE STORY OF HIS OWN SECRET WARS!

DR. WHO ARTIST
DAVE GIBBONS
ON THE BRITISH COMICS BRAIN DRAIN!

#16

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S COMICS INTERVIEW

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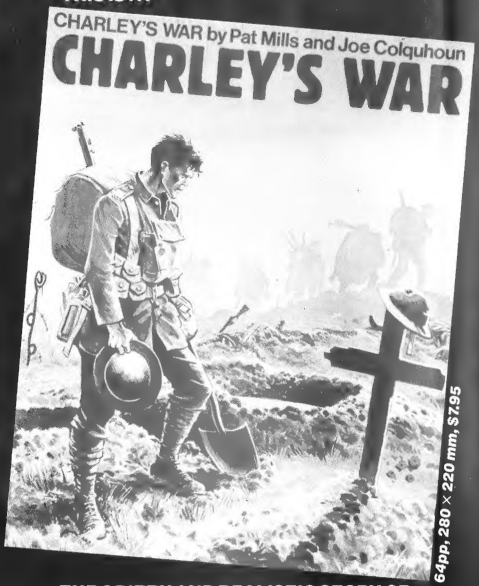
A FICTIONEER PUBLICATION

WORLD WAR 1. 1914.

A TIME OF DEATH AND DESPAIR IN THE MUDDY TRENCHES ON THE WESTERN FRONT. THIS IS THE STORY OF 16 YEAR OLD CHARLEY BOURNE, A NAIVE YOUTH WHO FOUGHT IN THAT WAR. THIS IS...



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UP FRONT

As our cover banner heralds, this issue includes a comics insert that previews SOUTHERN KNIGHTS #8. For the full story, of course, you'll have to pick up that extravaganza issue, on sale at your favorite comics shop early in 1985. So let me warn you: Once you've read the "teaser" — you *will* want to know the conclusion!

How can I be so sure of that? Because, at this writing, I have only seen the preview pages — and I know that *I* sure want to see what happens next!

Why am I so enthusiastic about this independent comics series? Because, starting with issue #8, SOUTHERN KNIGHTS will become a COMICS INTERVIEW publication! There is nothing quite so exciting as being there to watch a new concept taking shape, a new creative team growing and developing into something great right before your eyes.

From its humble beginnings (the earliest SOUTHERN KNIGHTS artist was none other than **Butch Guice**, who has since gone on to make something of a name for himself at Marvel with MICRONAUTS and, most recently, SWASHBUCKLERS) to now, this series has continued to grow and mature. I believe SOUTHERN KNIGHTS may be about to blossom before our very eyes into a beauty of a book.

Check out the preview in this issue of COMICS INTERVIEW. Then go out and demand a copy of SOUTHERN KNIGHTS #8 from your comics shop. It's a double-size special that also includes *all* you need to know from the first seven issues, including a lot of great early **Guice** art, so that you can enjoy the series starting with SOUTHERN KNIGHTS #8.

Get in on a good thing early. Watch a worthwhile comic coming into its own. Have fun reading SOUTHERN KNIGHTS.

And, above all — be happy!

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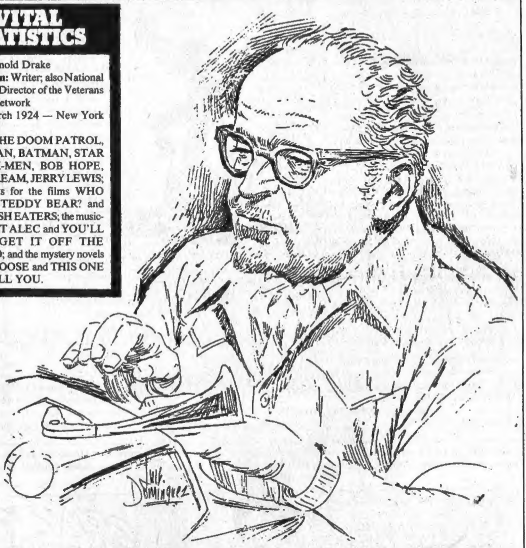
"At DC I banged my head against the no-no's of the time."

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Arnold Drake
Occupation: Writer; also National Executive Director of the Veterans Bedside Network
Born: March 1924 — New York City
Credits: THE DOOM PATROL, DEADMAN, BATMAN, STAR TREK, X-MEN, BOB HOPE, STARSTREAM, JERRY LEWIS; screenplays for the films WHO KILLED TEDDY BEAR? and THE FLESH EATERS; the musicals SMART ALEC and YOU'LL NEVER GET IT OFF THE GROUND; and the mystery novels STEEL NOOSE and THIS ONE WILL KILL YOU.



Art: Luis Dominguez

ARNOLD DRAKE

"Marvel was willing to take chances that DC

Best known as the creator of THE DOOM PATROL and DEADMAN — two feats that alone would earn him a place in comics history — Arnold Drake scripted comics for over thirty years. He wrote the first SHOWCASE feature ("Fire Fighters") in 1956; the pre-New Look BATMAN; a long stream of humor comics (BOB HOPE, JERRY LEWIS, DOBIE GILLIS); and a host of others, including BLACKHAWK (for which he wrote a latter-day origin story), STAR TREK, and X-MEN.

Red-bearded, iconoclastic, and a born raconteur, Arnold spoke to comics collector/scholar/historian (and devoted DOOM PATROL and DEADMAN fan) Lou Mougin about his stormy career, from his early collaboration with BATMAN -creator Bob Kane, to his struggles with the DC hierarchy and Stan Lee, to his most recent (and unusual) comics creation — a comic-strip starring Ed McMahon . . .

LOU MOUGIN: *In NOT BRAND ECCH #11, at the end of a story you wrote, there's a tombstone that reads, "Arnold Drake, Writer, Raconteur and Rotten Pool-Player." You think you'd really like that in your obituary?* (Laughter.)

ARNOLD DRAKE: No, and I doubt very much that I wrote that. I suspect **Roy Thomas** did that. He was editing NOT BRAND ECCH at that time. I would not do anything as feeble as "Rotten Pool-Player."

With a name like that, no wonder people avoided him: Negative Man goes into action in MY GREATEST ADVENTURE #84.

LOU: *That's what I thought. We'll get back to your Marvel work, but going back to 1963 when you were with DC, how did you conjure up THE DOOM PATROL?*

ARNOLD: That's a little like asking, "How does the creative process work?" I can remember the actual conditions that surrounded it, which was that the book, MY GREATEST ADVENTURE, was in trouble, and **Murray Boltinoff** wanted a feature that he thought might get it out of trouble. So I started working on a notion. You see, the anti-hero was certainly around at the time — I didn't start it.

LOU: *Would that be the Marvel influence?*

ARNOLD: Well, the Marvel influence was only a part of a broader scene. Marvel was actually reacting as well as acting. The anti-hero was coming on the scene in general. Marvel was not creating the anti-hero — the world was creating the anti-hero, by recognizing that things were not all that black and white — there were a lot of greys — and that good guys were sometimes bad, and bad guys, now and then, sometimes loved their mothers. The difference was that Marvel occupied a secondary position and was willing to take chances that DC — then called National — was not willing to take. As a result Marvel fell onto the anti-hero before DC, because DC felt the notion was uncommercial and bad for the house image.

LOU: *You're talking about the establishment people there like Weisinger and Schwartz, aren't you?*

ARNOLD: Yeah, **Jack Schiff,** too. **Schiff** was a highly moral, ethical man, and he had a difficulty with the whole concept of the anti-hero. As far as he was concerned, it was important to keep things black-and-

© 1983 NPP/DC Comics, Inc.

Elasti-Girl, enlarging herself to Gargantuan proportions, warns the airborne Negative Man of a threat to their fellow Doom Patroller, Robotman — here (far right) encased in lead and held hostage by the DP 's arch-enemy, General Immortus. From MY GREATEST ADVENTURE #84.

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wasn't, because Marvel had very little to lose."

white for kids, to keep kids from doing bad things because they couldn't distinguish between good and evil.

LOU: *Isn't that Wertham-esque?*

ARNOLD: A little bit, except that **Schiff** thought that **Wertham** was full of crap, too. He thought the only way that you could fight a **Wertham** was not to do the things that **Wertham** was accusing the industry of. But you don't fight anyone that way. What you do is to give up the whole game. But anyway, as I said, Marvel was willing to shoot craps because they had very little to lose. I've been told that the Marvel attitude was one **Stan Lee** had been trying to purvey for years and years, but the climate wasn't right. But, about 1964, the climate beacame right.

It was about that time that I wrote a seven page memo to **Irwin Donnenfeld**, in which I tried to outline what I thought was happening, and why I thought **Stan Lee's** Marvel was moving up and would continue to move up. But Irwin tossed it aside and said, "You don't understand — we outsell this man four-to-one." *(Laughter.)*

LOU: *He didn't notice the rate of growth Marvel was experiencing?*

ARNOLD: Right, and when Marvel eventually overtook DC, he went overboard the other way and decided to copy everything that Stan did. That was essentially what my memo had said. "If we don't change now, we will eventually end up aping and mimicking Marvel," which is what DC did after a while, and it was kind of ludicrous.

LOU: *Is that one of the reasons you went over to Marvel around 1968?*

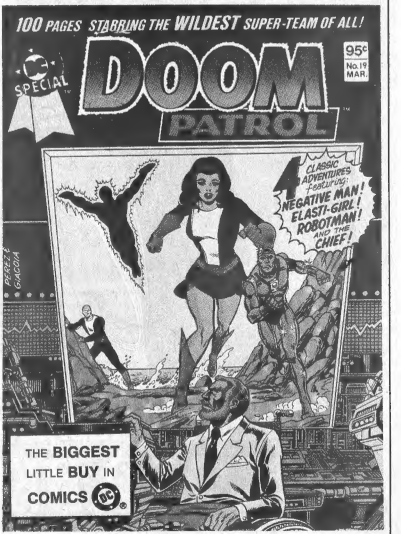
ARNOLD: No, that had more to do with the changes that were being made at DC. They knew they had to change something, but they were not responsive to what was really in the wind at the time. Appointing **Carmine Infantino** publisher was, I thought, an indication of bankruptcy. It meant to me that they had no idea of what was going on. Carmine accomplished one thing for them — he gave them sharper-looking covers. But there was no reason why they had to appoint him publisher in order to accomplish that. They should just have had him in charge of sharper-looking covers. So I sat down with **Irwin Donnenfeld,** and told him that I thought DC was on a suicide course unless they recognized the changes that were happening among the kids and why the kids were looking for a different kind of story, with a different philosophical viewpoint. And it wound up with me saying that I felt Carmine was the wrong choice for the job and they had better recognize they needed new leadership, and that I was volunteering for that leadership. Irwin said, "Give me six months to work that out," and I said that I didn't think they would be in business in six months, under Carmine's leadership. That was an exaggeration, of course. A deliberate exaggeration. But Irwin and I came to an agreement that as long as he was not going to give me that position, he was going to place me in a different position and pay me an extra bonus. He defaulted on the agreement, and that's when I left.

LOU: *So that's about the time DOOM PATROL died and you went over to Marvel and started writing X-MEN, CAPTAIN MARVEL, and so on. But I'm getting my cart before the horse and I want to get back to 1963 and back to the DOOM PATROL. Did your character Robot Man come from the 1940s hero?*

ARNOLD: No, I didn't even know there was one. I think **Julie Schwartz** stopped me in the hall one day and said, "You know, there was a Robotman." As a matter of fact, I called my guy Automaton in the first story, and then we decided it was an awkward name, so we called him Robotman. But I had not known of the original Robotman. I was not that big a comics fan. I was a pulp fan, and I was a fan of the early comics — early BATMAN, early SUPERMAN — but that lasted briefly for me. So I really was not that into comics history.

LOU: *I kind of figured that, because your work was not that derivative from*

George Perez and Frank Giacoia did the cover of this collection of Arnold Drake stories.



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Little Wendy went to church
but she didn't go to pray...

For in this church the
cross dripped blood

and little girls were
brought to slay.

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"I thought that DC was on a suicide course."

other comics. I always harbored a secret suspicion that the chief of the Doom Patrol was based on you.

ARNOLD: No, I always thought that, subconsciously, I based the chief on Mycroft Holmes, Sherlock Holmes' older brother. You know, Mycroft never left his chair to solve mysteries. So I turned the chair in Mycroft's club into a wheelchair.

LOU: *And, shortly after that, the X-MEN came around with Professor X in a wheelchair. I guess there wasn't much of a possibility that anyone at Marvel copied that idea.*

ARNOLD: Not unless someone was looking over my shoulder while I was writing. X-MEN came out almost at the same time — just a little later.

LOU: *And then about four months after you did the Brotherhood of Evil in DOOM PATROL, X-MEN #4 featured the debut of the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants.*

ARNOLD: I guess Stan and I were breathing down each other's necks. *(Laughter.)*

LOU: *When I was reading the X-MEN/TEEN TITANS crossover, it struck me that one of the Titans, Changeling, is an old Doom Patrol alumnus. I pictured him seeing Professor X and saying, "Gee, you remind me of someone I know."* (Laughter.) *How did you come up with the idea for Negative Man and Elasti-Girl?*

ARNOLD: In comics — at least, this is the way I work — it starts with an effect. You're looking for a picture. And once you got that, you're looking for a rationalization. How did it come about? How did this thing get this shape or this power? And then you get yourself involved in the origin. And my thing was to always try to get as human a story as I could, and as realistic as I could.

LOU: *I thought that many times the Doom Patrol were more human than many of Marvel's so-called "heroes with problems." Especially in the first issue I picked up. But I have to admit that the cover grabbed me — it had a big gorilla with a bandolier across his chest!*

ARNOLD: Generally, I would start by roughing out a cover and then get myself a story to substantiate the cover picture.

LOU: *Is that how most DC operations worked back then — designing the cover first and then doing the story?*

ARNOLD: Well, in those days, most of the DC books, I think, consisted of three or four yarns, and one of those yarns had to be the cover story. One of the ways that you sold the story was by coming up with

ROBOTMAN
ELASTI-GIRL
NEGATIVE MAN
WORLD'S STRANGEST HEROES!
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
NOV. NO. 99
12¢
The DOOM PATROL
NEW!
NOW THAT YOU'RE TRAPPED IN MY COCOON, MY DEADLY BEES WILL FINISH THE JOB!
MEET BEAST-BOY
THE WILDEST, WEIRDEST TEEN TORNADO IN COMICS HISTORY! SEE HIM TRY TO BLAST HIS WAY ONTO THE TEAM!
PLUS
CRAWLING KILLERS!
THE FANTASTIC BUG-MAN
AND HIS INCREDIBLE INSECT ARMY!

The Doom Patrol wishes they'd brought along a giant can of Raid on this adventure. Note cover-copy heralding a new super-hero, Beast Boy, later to win fame as a Teen Titan under his current cognomen, "Changeling."

a cover idea. **France Herron** and I were responsible for most of the cover ideas, and we always knew we could sell a story by giving them a helluva cover. If the book was full, they'd put the story in inventory.

LOU: *How did Beast Boy — now the Changeling — come about?*

ARNOLD: Is that what they call him — Changeling? That's a lousy name. *(Laughter.)* Especially since Beast Boy was a double *entendre.* He was a brat — a pain in the ass. So calling him Beast Boy was appropriate. How did he come about? Well, we wanted a character who could assume many different animal forms, and also wanted a kid in the strip, someone the kids could relate to. They were starting to talk back to their elders. They were starting to make their elders *earn* their respect. So Beast Boy was an attempt to picture what I thought was happening among some of the young people.

LOU: *You haven't seen any issues of the NEW TEEN TITANS have you?*

ARNOLD: No, I haven't. Is he still a brash little son of a bitch?

LOU: *Yes, I guess that would be the best way you could describe him.* (Laughter.)

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"Appointing Carmine Infantino publisher was, I thought, an indication of DC's bankruptcy."

Only now he's hanging out with other teens, so they don't have to take that kind of shit from him.

ARNOLD: I see. They're all brash sons of bitches.

LOU: *Did you script the last issue of DOOM PATROL, where they died?*

ARNOLD: Yeah, it was my notion that at the end **Murray Boltinoff** and **Bruno Premiani** and I would be depicted talking it over and deciding whether we would kill them or not, leave it up to the reader. **Donnenfeld** had them wipe out my figure. He had them remove it because the son of a bitch walked out on him. *(Laughter.)*

LOU: *That's pretty beastly. How did DEADMAN come about?*

ARNOLD: Well, a little bit the way the DOOM PATROL started. Almost everything I started had the same reason for existing — a book was in trouble.

LOU: *STRANGE ADVENTURES, in this case?*

ARNOLD: Right. **Jack Miller** asked me to do something for the book, and I got an idea for it. I said, "I'm going to try to sell you a title and I hope you're going to go with me on it." He said, "Well, what is it?" I said, "DEADMAN." He said, "You've got to be kidding! We'll never get it past the code! You can't call a character DEADMAN!" *(Laughter.)* And **Carmine Infantino**, bless him, was in the room at the time, drawing something, and he turned around and made a fist behind **Miller's** back, meaning, "Go, man, go!" So I kept arguing with **Miller**, and finally we got it through.

LOU: *That first DEADMAN story had some of the best dialogue I'd ever seen in comics. Deadman was kind of a brash son of a bitch, too. I wouldn't say he was totally anti-hero, but he certainly differed from the standard super-hero.*

ARNOLD: Oh, yeah, he was out of the **James Dean** and **John Garfield** school of anti-hero. **Garfield** was really the early **James Dean**, and the anti-hero of the Forties. he had the soul of a poet, but a tough outer shell when he knew it was necessary, to survive. And Boston Brand — Deadman — was the same kind of character. The anti-hero was still quite popular then, and we were going into a somewhat mystical period, where the young people were into the wisdom of the Orient. Hare Krishna, the whole Zen movement and all of that was in the air. And I decided to use that as a kind of timely support for the notion of a being that was neither living nor dead. So I created the Eastern mystical character, Vashnu, who predicts that Brand has a special fate. Now there were two things that I always kept in mind: one was to make people sound as much like real people as I could, and give them motives as much like real people's as I possibly could — which comics kind of avoided. You know, the motivations of comics characters were pretty two-dimensional. So I tried to motivate the characters, as much as I could, as they might be in real life,and I tried to make the stories I was writing smack of the period in which they were being written. That probably dates the stories a little, as the years passed, but for the time in which they were written, it made them very much alive.

LOU: *I think it was a superb series. it was as close as we'll ever get to a latter-day SPIRIT, and in many ways I liked it better.*

ARNOLD: I liked it. I was sorry I was unable to continue with it. I had a little difference with **Miller** about some of the content. I was banging my head against some of the no-no's of the time. One of them was that you couldn't write about cancer, believe it or not. So I decided I was going to write about cancer. I came up with a story about a governor who was dying of cancer, and his secretary who —

They said it couldn't be done — but Arnold did it anyway: he created a super-hero (or super-anti-hero) called "Deadman." The irascible spook meets the Phantom Stranger in THE PHANTOM STRANGER #33.

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"I guess Stan Lee and I were breathing

ALL RIGHT---WE'VE TAKEN IT LONG ENOUGH! TIME WE STARTED GIVING A LITTLE OF OUR OWN!
INDUBITABLY, MON CAPITAIN! IT IS NOT ONLY BETTER TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE--- IT IS SAFER!
ALSO MORE GRATIFYING, IF YOU DIG PUNISHING YOUR ENEMIES! AND I DIG!

The X-Men psyche up for battle against Magneto in X-MEN #51. Words by "Awesome" Arnold Drake (his Marvel name). The credit for the pencils in this issue says, "Do we have to *tell* you?" Inks by John Tartaglione.

© 1968 Canam Publishers Sales Group/NCG.

according to the governor — was far more able to be governor than he was. There was only one reason the secretary wasn't governor — he was black. So there were those two aspects of the story that **Miller** was afraid of. He said that he was going to have to do something about the story, and the reason he gave is that there wasn't enough action — there was too damn much talk. My point was that if the talk was the right kind of talk, it supplants the action, to some degree. I was trying to explain to him that the words were becoming as important as the pictures. I was ready to fight for that story except that the time to fight never came — I walked away from DC.

LOU: *Kanigher, Miller and Adams did the remainder of the series. How did you feel about the stories they did?*

ARNOLD: I read very little of it after I left, because I found that all they were doing , within the basic situation I had set up, was a lot of repetitious crap. I did not enjoy the characterizations. That was a series that had to rest on characterizations. See, to me, Deadman had a piece of Mary Worth in him. Why do I say that? Because Deadman kept getting involved in the lives of other people. He *had* to live through them — he was forced to. Mary Worth lived through other people because that was the only way that the writer and illustrator could move the story around. She lived vicariously, because the writer wanted her to. Boston Brand had to live vicariously, because Fate wanted him to — the Fate that made him neither living

"Stan Lee was interested, by and large, in having you imitate him." Battle action from X-MEN #49. Words by Arnold Drake, art by Heck, Roth, and Tartaglione.

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down each other's necks." *(Laughter.)*

nor dead. So, therefore, he had to move around from body to body and in the process get involved in someone else's life. Now you've got to get a good, gutsy story every time that happens, like the dying governor and his black secretary, which gives you a lot of good, emotional material. That's what I found lacking in what those guys were doing.

LOU: *Did you have any hassles over the first plot, which involved opium smuggling?*

ARNOLD: No, I don't think they caught me on that.

LOU: *You left DC for Marvel in 1968, and I remember you started scripting X-MEN, CAPTAIN MARVEL, and several other books. How did you feel about scripting X-MEN after doing DOOM PATROL, which was so similar?*

ARNOLD: First, it was a question of getting used to the Marvel system of doing a plot outline, and then getting the material drawn, and then having to write according to the drawing. It took me a while to get that whipped. I didn't mind that system — to some degree it made life easier for a writer — but also it constricted me a lot. Unless you were willing to do a story breakdown that was almost as convoluted as a sample script — and Stan wouldn't have stood for that, because he was trying to give the artist more and more freedom. He recognized the importance of the graphics — you must give him credit for that. But there was a certain amount of restriction. Other than that, you always like to work with your own children, and if you can, with something that you have created. But the next best thing is to try to add something to whatever it is you have been asigned — throw in new characters and so on. I felt that when you worked at Marvel, Stan was sitting on your back all the time. He was not particularly interested in bringing out the best in you. He was interested, by and large, in getting you to imitate him.

LOU: *How did you feel about those two issues that Steranko drew?*

ARNOLD: I don't know — Jim's art always gave me mixed feelings. I liked the loose kind of style that he had, at the same time I disliked the lack of discipline. I was drawn in two directions. What do *you* think of Steranko's work?

LOU: *Well, I like it. But I'm his friend.* (Laughter.)

ARNOLD: He has evolved considerably since then. It's been about seventeen years.

LOU: *When did you get into comics, Arnold?*

A Jim Steranko cover for an Arnold-authored issue of THE X-MEN.

ARNOLD: I don't remember, precisely — somewhere around '57 or '58. It started when **Bob Kane** and I sat down to do a strip together.

LOU: *How did you meet Bob Kane?*

ARNOLD: Oddly enough, he was a neighbor of my brother, who introduced us. We started talking, and Bob said he was interested in doing a strip. We kicked some ideas around and we finally came up with "Nick O'Time," a kind of melodrama comedy-adventure — a funny private-eye thing. It was pretty far out — kind of wild. Kane wanted to be the salesman, so it was he who approached the Hall Syndicate and they turned him down. As far as I know, it never saw syndication.

LOU: *So it might still be in Bob Kane's closet?*

ARNOLD: Yeah. I'd like to see it because I remember it as being pretty funny. I remember that there were three guys from the Middle East going after Nick, wanting to kill him, and they looked and walked like Egyptian hieroglyphics — one foot directly in front of the other, two-dimen-

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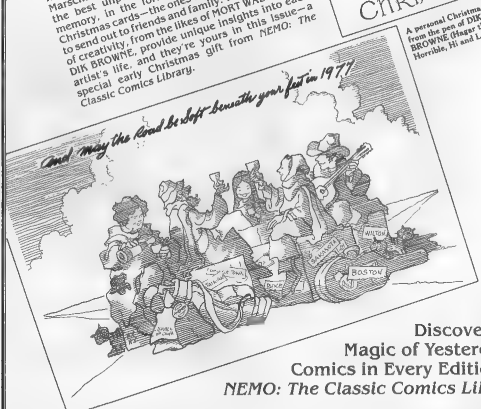
A Special Christmas Gift in NEMO the classic comics library

In the pages of *NEMO* #10, Editor Richard Marschall has culled from his collection some of the best, unpublished cartoon work of recent memory, in the form of artist's own personal Christmas cards—the ones they design each year to send out to friends and family. These treasures of creativity, from the likes of MORT WALKER and DIK BROWNE, provide unique insights into each artist's life, and they're yours in this issue—a special early Christmas gift from *NEMO: The Classic Comics Library*.

A personal Christmas card from the pen of DIK BROWNE (Hagar the Horrible, Hi and Lois).



Discover the Magic of Yesterday's Comics in Every Edition of *NEMO: The Classic Comics Library*

Very probably the strangest newspaper strip ever, GUSTAVE VERBECK's *Upside Downs* are also featured in this issue in a long portfolio section. The artwork may look a little strange at first, until you realize that the strip is intended to be read twice: once right-side-up and then again upside down! A bizarre classic from comics' Golden Age.

Plus: NEMO's interviews continue with a talk with *Miss Peach* and *Momma* creator MELL LAZARUS, "Penman of the Past" RAYMOND CRAWFORD EWER, and a classic segment from the *Mutt and Jeff* comic strip is also featured.

Also in #10, the beginning of a new series on the great European comics heroes and the continuation of the autobiography of ALLEN SAUNDERS.

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"At Marvel, Stan was always sitting on your back."

sionally drawn — and they were called Osiris, Josiris, and Mosiris. *(Laughter.)*

LOU: *What was your first story for DC?*

ARNOLD: It was called "The Second Death of Abraham Lincoln," and I think it was in MY GREATEST ADVENTURE. The story was a switch on the story of a guy dreaming something and thinking it was real. It was about a guy living something and thinking it was a dream. He was living the life of Lincoln. The second one I did, if I'm not mistaken, was a BATMAN — "Batman Meets Jules Verne."

LOU: *You did a lot of BATMANs for Jack Schiff, didn't you?*

ARNOLD: Yeah. It started with **Weisinger** — an impossible guy to do business with, unless you were really a depraved soul. *(Laughter.)* But I wasn't that depraved! So I just stopped working for DC for a while. But **Weisinger** was no longer working on the BATMAN books, and **Schiff** was, so, around 1960 I started working for **Schiff.**

LOU: *And about that time you switched to BOB HOPE and JERRY LEWIS?*

ARNOLD: I don't know the precise date but it dates back to whenever the humor editor died. There was a bit of a scandal surrounding that. I had been trying to sell him humor for some time, and he said, "I got plenty of stories, I don't need you, I do the stuff myself." Then when he died, I found out that he had been actually getting the artists to write their own stories but not paying them for it. It was a whole stinking mess that amounted to a great deal of money and it's just possible that DC set up a whole new bookkeeping system because of that one incident. So when that guy died, the humor books fell to **Murray Boltinoff**, and Murray wasn't about to try and write that stuff. I liked dealing with Murray — it was kind of a give-and-take proposition, and he gave me a lot of freedom. We used to have our difficulties now and then, but essentially if he felt you knew what you were doing, he left you alone. And that's the best way to get the most out of a writer or artist. Murray got more out of the writers and artists there than other editors — who forced them to hew to their concept of what they should be doing. **Schiff** was and is a very decent man, but **Schiff** straightjacketed the people, and **Weisinger** was even worse — he'd even dictate dialogue to you. Anyway, that's how it started. I walked in the day it was announced that the humor editor had died. All hell had broken loose. They realized they would need a lot of material quickly, so I started writing. I think I began with DOBIE GILLIS. That was fun. And then I went on to do BOB HOPE or JERRY LEWIS.

LOU: *To your knowledge, did either one of those guys ever read a BOB HOPE or JERRY LEWIS comic?*

ARNOLD: I don't know. I wish **Jerry Lewis** had, because I think several of those comics were better than his movies. *(Laughter.)* There was one in particular that I was really crazy about and I often wish that he had read it — maybe it would have interested him. I created a nephew for him, Renfrew, and Renfrew has some sort of secret formula in his head that he can't remember. Through some sort of godawful system they find a way of injecting Jerry into Renfrew's brain — sort of like FANTASTIC VOYAGE — and the whole thing is the adventure of a grown man in a child's brain. Seeing some of the images — the nightmares that kids have, their attitudes toward their teachers and their parents, and so forth. It was funny and made for some marvelous illustrations.

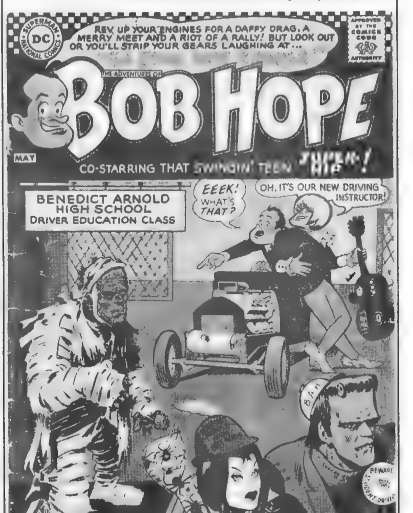
LOU: *I'd also be remiss if I didn't ask you about the cult hero Super-Hip II — a rock star from BOB HOPE comics.*

ARNOLD: I think maybe that I was insensitive about creating him. What I was trying to do was make fun of rock'n'roll.

LOU: *It was a funny parody.*

ARNOLD: I guess it was. I think that the attitudes toward him were both positive and negative, and you were meant to feel both ways toward him. You were meant to feel he was fighting a lot of the cornball shit that was around and that deserved to

The debut of one of Arnold's more notorious creations, Super-Hip. Crazy, man.


DC
REV UP YOUR ENGINES FOR A DAFFY DRAG, A MERRY MEET AND A RIOT OF A RALLY! BUT LOOK OUT OR YOU'LL STRIP YOUR GEARS LAUGHING AT...
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
THE ADVENTURES OF
BOB HOPE
MAY
CO-STARRING THAT SWINGIN' TEEN
SUPER-HIP!
BENEDICT ARNOLD HIGH SCHOOL DRIVER EDUCATION CLASS
EEEK! WHAT'S THAT?
OH, IT'S OUR NEW DRIVING INSTRUCTOR!
BEWARE

© 1968 NPP/DC Comics, Inc.

"Doing STAR TREK at Gold Key, you could get

be fought, and simultaneously, that he was a sickening braggart. I was also trying to make fun of the super-power thing by making him look ridiculous.

LOU: *You scripted two movies, that I know of — WHO KILLED TEDDY BEAR? and THE FLESH EATERS — and Super-Hip, in one of the BOB HOPEs, wound up singing "Pete's Beat," which was one of the songs you wrote for THE FLESH EATERS.*

ARNOLD: I produced as well as wrote THE FLESH EATERS, and I kinda co-directed it although I didn't credit myself on it. I drew every scene in the picture before we shot it.

LOU: *A storyboard?*

ARNOLD: Yeah, but before people were doing that thing, as far as I know. What I did was, on the blank page facing a page of script, I drew each scene, with stick-figures, and it gave a fair idea of what the scene should be — whether it was close or medium. See, my point is that when a screenwriter sits down and writes "Close Up," or writes "Medium Shot," it's still a very general description. How close is close, and how medium is medium? The only way you're really going to arrive at describing that is to draw it, and that's what I did, and it's why I say that, in a sense, I was co-director — because I really directed the entire photography by laying down the scenes as I saw them. We produced it for under $100,000, yet we made it completely Screen Actors Guild. We just expolited the shit out of ourselves. We worked day and night. We created our own props, including the monster, and we did our own animation.

LOU: *Including the color scene at the end?*

ARNOLD: Everything. The works.

LOU: *Did that turn much of a profit?*

ARNOLD: Not for us — not until we got it back from the distributor, and then the television sale helped considerably, and now there may be a cable sale again.

LOU: *I'll be watching to see that — to see "Pete's Beat," if nothing else.*

ARNOLD: There's a funny story about that. That it was pure necessity. We wanted to open with a record being played by some disc-jockey, and we needed the rights to some music, and we didn't want to pay for them because we couldn't afford to. So I called an old Army buddy of mine, with whom I had written a couple of musical shows in the Army. And I said, "Have you got anything lying around already recorded, that I could write a lyric to?" He said, "Yeah, I have — it's a boogie-woogie thing," and he put it on for me over the telephone. And I made a couple of notes, and one of them was that there was a theme from **Tchaikovsky's** 1812 OVERTURE that made a pretty good counter-point to the tune he had written. So I wrote a melody line against it which was kind of like the 1812 OVERTURE. And then I wrote, "Pete's Beat." I went into a recording studio and I put the record on and I whistled and I sang and I did whatever you have to do to make a record.

LOU: *Did you enjoy doing STAR TREK for Gold Key?*

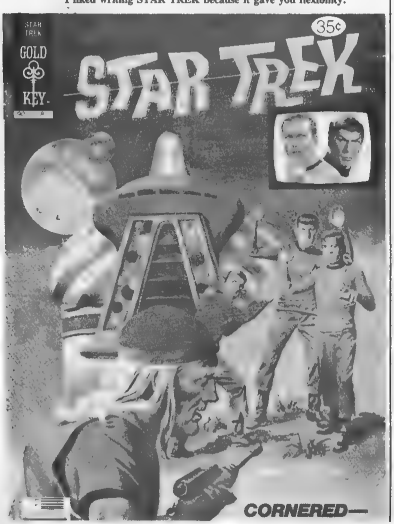
ARNOLD: I liked STAR TREK because it gave you a lot of flexibility. You could discover another world, and you could do anything you wanted on that world — because it was *your* world. You created it. So it gave me a chance to do all kinds of things. And I did. I did ROMEO AND JULIET and all kinds of stuff. And you could raise social issues because the stories were set on a distant planet. You weren't talking about black, you were talking about blues or greens. Even though Gold Key was basically the most conservative of all the houses, in STAR TREK you could get away with stuff you couldn't get away with over at DC, maiqly because it was an alien civilization you were writing about.

I also did all kinds of underground work. And I enjoyed that.

LOU: *What about STARSTREAM?*

ARNOLD: STARSTREAM was a damn good experiment, and I wish it would have continued. I would have liked to have done more of it. Maybe it should have gone into the bookstores instead of the five-and-dimes. I felt for a long time that certain comics should go into book-

"I liked writing STAR TREK because it gave you flexibility."



© 1978 Paramount Pictures Corporation

away with stuff you couldn't get away with at DC."

stores, printed in a slightly different format, so that bookstore people wouldn't be squeamish about buying them. Maybe black-and-white, in hardcover, and given an adult feeling. I wrote several originals for it that I really enjoyed doing.

LOU: *It had good adaptations of Asimov and Sturgeon stories, and someone did THE THING — John Campbell's "Who Goes There?" — better than it had been done in movies, almost.*

ARNOLD: I think I did that.

LOU: *What have you been doing since you left comics?*

ARNOLD: I've worked about twenty years as a freelance writer for AT&T, doing films for them. I'm writing for the stage right now, in collaboration with my brother. We did one play which has been optioned three times now. We hope the fourth time will stick. *(Laughter.)* We heard of one writing team that had something optioned twenty times — that's the record. The play we're working on is about **Gilbert** and **Sullivan**. And I wrote a couple of non-fiction books. I've written in almost every medium. I've written a couple of children's musicals, one of which, SMART ALEC — about **Alexander Graham Bell** — has been touring for the past six years. Another, YOU'LL NEVER GET OFF THE GROUND — about the **Wright Brothers** — has been picked up by the North Carolina Opera Company and will be touring North Carolina this Fall. And, as you know, I've been the National Executive Director of the Veteran's Bedside Network for the past three years.

LOU: *Were you behind their ad — the one that Joe Kubert drew and Ed McMahon stars in — that's been running in comics?*

Jack Kirby contributed this drawing to the 36th Anniversary Yearbook of Veterans Bedside Network. Arnold is National Executive Director of the VBN.

ARNOLD: Yeah. I wrote that. We've received close to fifty replies so far, and I am now finally getting around to contacting these people and turning them into volunteers. When I first contacted **Steve Ross**, the head of Warner Communications, and then **Dick Giordano**, with the idea for the ad, the original idea was to run it just in the war books. My notion was that maybe we could turn some of the war lovers into veteran lovers. And then they decided to run the ad in all the DC books, which was fine with me.

LOU: *Do you think you'll ever get back into comic-book writing fulltime?*

ARNOLD: I doubt it. Certainly not full time. And there's a question in my mind whether or not I would get back into it at all. The conditions are better now, but they're still not terribly good. One of the reasons I left was that the conditions were bad. I tried to involve myself in changing the conditions, and I was not successful. And I began to then realize that, for one reason or another, the guys who write and draw comics were not really interested in working together to change the field.

LOU: *You mean unionizing?*

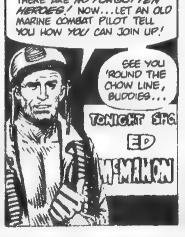
ARNOLD: Whatever you want to call it. I realized that perhaps the best you could do would be to get the best conditions you could for yourself, on your own — which was what I was trying to do with **Donnenfeld,** when he reneged on me. But if I had been able to get what I wanted from **Donnenfeld** it might have changed the field quite a bit. Or changed it sooner. Because it has changed quite a bit. But it took fifteen years or more for it to happen.

LOU: *What would it take to get you back to comics?*

ARNOLD: Someone in power in the field would have to ask me. But since most of the current editorial leaders seem convinced — so far as I can tell — that nobody over 35 can write comics, that isn't too likely to happen.

Also, two other things would be required: a fair degree of editorial freedom and a decent page rate. Of all the creative writing fields I've worked in, comics remains the lowest paying. Of course, it has improved somewhat since I shocked the front office at DC back in 1967 by demanding reprint payments for all writers. But it has a long way to go.

Sgt. Rock and Ed McMahon team up on behalf of the Veterans Bedside Network. Words by Arnold Drake, art by Joe Kubert.


BECAUSE OF THE V.B.N., THERE ARE NO FORGOTTEN HEROES! NOW...LET AN OLD MARINE COMBAT PILOT TELL YOU HOW YOU CAN JOIN UP!
SEE YOU 'ROUND THE CHOW LINE, BUDDIES...
TONIGHT STG.
ED
MCMAHON

Yes, I want to help a hero. I'm at least 16 years old.

NAME

ADDRESS:

MAIL TO:
Veteran's Bedside Network
1841 Broadway
New York, N.Y. 10023

Attention: Arnold Drake

Courtesy of the Veterans Bedside Network

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JONNI THUNDER
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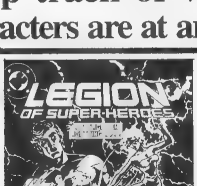
FROM DC COMICS. WHERE LEGENDS LIVE.™

"I can't keep track of where all the LEGION characters are at any given time."



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PAUL LEVITZ

THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES occupies a special place in comics. There are other super-group series, but LSH is one of the most durable,with possibly the largest and most varied cast of characters. Maybe, more than anything else, what makes THE LEGION special is its fans — and there are legions of 'em — a network of doggedly loyal devotees who comprise almost a world of their own within the United Planets of Fandom.

Out of their ranks, in the early Seventies, came a young LEGION-lover, Paul Levitz, who had a dual interest in both the creative and the business sides of comics. Paul joined DC Comics, and is now not only Vice-President in charge of Operations, but is the writer of two LSH books: the regular comic (called the "softcover" edition) and the new deluxe-format, Baxter-paper "hardcover" edition. Jim Salicrup dropped in on the Vice-Presidential offices to quiz Paul about his double life in comics (although Paul promises to go into much greater detail about his business activities at DC in a separate, future interview); and to learn the truth about the legendary LEGION scorecards tucked away in Paul's desk . .

JIM SALICRUP: *How did you get interested in comic books?*

PAUL LEVITZ: Reading them. A kid up the block had a whole carton of them, and I flipped through them and I thought they were just fun. I've been involved in the field in one way or another from the time I was fourteen. So after most people usually drop out of comics, I've had good reason to keep reading them. I'm not sure how many of them I would read if I weren't in the business today. I might read *more* of them than I read now, because there'd be more time.

JIM: *How did you get involved in the comics industry?*

PAUL: NEWFANGLES, which was the fanzine **Don** and **Maggie Thompson** — who now edit COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE — were publishing back then, did something remarkable, which was to announce its death a year in advance so that other fanzines could come in. *(Laughter.)* **Paul Kupperberg** and I were friends, and like nice little kids we picked up the phone and called DC, and told them that if they would cooperate, we'd do a new newszine. They did and we did. And ultimately that became THE COMIC READER

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Paul Levitz
Born: 21 October 1956 — Brooklyn, NY
Occupation: Writer, and Vice-President in charge of Operations for DC Comics.
Training: The Business School of New York University
Credits: LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES, ADVENTURE, DC COMICS PRESENTS, etc.

PAUL LEVITZ

"Young people weren't welcome in comics. We were okay

Art from the cover of a Warner Communications press kit for DC Comics.

© 1982 DC Comics, Inc.

JIM: *I remember I would see you at conventions, when I was a go-fer at Marvel, and you used to come up for news. My impression was that you were adamant about not making a career out of comics.*

PAUL: Not at all. I was intent on working my way through NYU Business School, getting an MBA, and working for IBM or some similar company. But as you remember, Jim, those were days when young people were not particularly welcomed in comics. We were okay as long as we stayed back in our corner near the Xerox machine.

JIM: *Also, everybody said comics wouldn't last for another two years or so — that was about twelve years ago.* (Laughter.)

PAUL: That was certainly part of the popular thinking. But in my case, I just wanted to be a part of something, and there was no opening to be part of the comic-book industry. When **Jenette Kahn** came here, that started to change, radically.

JIM: *What do you do as Vice-President?*

PAUL: I'm responsible for the business side of the company, including marketing and licensing, international rights, and keeping the walls from falling-in. *(Laughter.)*

JIM: *How did you get involved in the business end of comics?*

PAUL: That's what I always wanted to do. I never particularly wanted to write comics. I have done some competent comic books that have been entertaining, but I don't have any magic. I'm a pretty decent business person, and I've got an education in that area. I'm a rarity in this field, in that I've got a business background, plus an awareness of the creative process and of what our readership cares about.

JIM: *Has that awareness been a plus or minus?*

PAUL: I like to think of it as a plus. I think that in any business you're better off if you understand what the consumer wants.

JIM: *Do you find your work a challenge? How do you approach it?*

PAUL: I find it a load of fun. I enjoy my job as I go from working with television people on an animation deal in the morning, to talking to a licensee about a toy line he'd like to do and, in between, working on how to pitch some new book we'd like to publish, or working to change the technology so that the books will be printed better. There's a wonderfully diverse set of things to do.

JIM: *Do you think you'd be equally happy at IBM?*

PAUL: I never tried it — I never had a real job! *(Laughter.)* So I can't tell you. I certainly know that I enjoy what I do here.

JIM: *What are you involved in now that will affect the comics that get to the newsstand?*

PAUL: I've been very involved with World Color in the new Flexographic printing process.

JIM: *What's that?*

PAUL: It's an upgrade of the traditional letterpress method. Two years ago, World Color couldn't print anything but thirty-pound newsprint. For many years, the publishers just wanted the same price, or a lower price, and we didn't care how much worse the physical product had to be. However, the readers today — especially the reader likely to be reading COMICS INTERVIEW — cares about the quality of the product. He's not reading a disposable product; he's willing to invest a certain amount of money in it. As our readership has changed, our logic has changed as a result, and so we got the printers to find ways to use thirty-pound Mando. Flexographic is a follow-up on that. It's a way of changing the physical press format to get what I think is ultimately a higher quality job. It's still in the test stages. We've published our first book in that process.

JIM: *Which is ...?*

as long as we stayed back near the Xerox machine."

Paul says: "The hardcore truth is that DC is a successful company and Warner is happy with us."

PAUL: The direct-sales copies of SPANNER'S GALAXY #1.

JIM: *How will this new process change comics?*

PAUL: It gives you the potential for more vivid color, better detail, tighter line-screen, to an all-around better printing of the art form.

JIM: *Well, a while back when they went from metal plates to plastic plates you could see the fine lines just becoming squiggles.*

PAUL: A lot of physical detail was simply lost — just dropped out of the artwork entirely.

JIM: *Now comics seem to be going in the other direction, moving to better methods of reproduction.*

PAUL: We're trying.

JIM: *You mentioned that the readership has changed. In what ways?*

PAUL: We seem to have a lot more older readers, who, as I said, will go for a more expensive, more quality-oriented product.

JIM: *How did you find this out?*

PAUL: The comic-book business has never been the best on demographics, so I can't say precisely, but the best information we have indicates that that's the case.

JIM: *How has that changed DC?*

PAUL: We've introduced books with more mature themes and adult content, and have higher-quality production standards. I like the broader range of what's creatively possible in comics today. It used to be that the comics business was devoted to finding out

SPANNER'S GALAXY #1 was printed in the new Flexographic process. Paul has been very involved in introducing Flexographics to the DC line.

the one trend that was hot, whether it was war or super-heroes or mystery, and publishing all that was possible of that one *genre*, while barely keeping the other *genres* alive. Now we're experimenting with a number of different *genres*. Perhaps not a tremendous number of readers are interested in them, but hopefully there are enough to support diverse approaches to doing comics.

JIM: *How involved are you, in your capacity as Vice-President, with the creative side?*

PAUL: A lot less than I used to be.

JIM: *Is that your personal preference?*

PAUL: Well, you can't be everywhere at once. Here, I think, I make a more singular contribution.

JIM: *You mentioned more mature formats. That's a controversial issue in itself. SWAMP THING is no longer going to have the Comics Code seal on it. Were you involved in that decision?*

PAUL: No. We made a general strategic decision a couple of years ago, that it was up to **Dick Giordano** whether or not he wanted a comic not to go through the Code. It was an editorial problem, not a business problem.

JIM: *And licensing? How's that working?*

PAUL: I'm very excited about that. Kenner, Parker Brothers and Fun Dimensions, in a coordinated program, did the SUPER

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"DC is a happy, healthy, profitable little company."

POWERS line of toys with a number of our other licensees as well, and it's doing fabulously. The best report we have is that it's outselling the comparable Marvel line by about two-to-one.

JIM: *Does the licensing have any effect on the comics themselves, or is it the other way around?*

PAUL: In this instance, the comic books have tremendous impact on the licensing. I think that the characters are really being portrayed properly for the first time. When a kid plays with an action figure, he traditionally holds it by its hips, as he flies it around and moves it. The gimmick of the Kenner line is that if you hold it that way and exert a little pressure, the character will demonstrate his power — Superman will punch, Wonder Woman will do bullets and bracelets, Green Lantern will thrust out his ring in the equivalent of a power blast, Flash will start running, Aquaman swims, Hawkman's wings beat, and so on. Really well devised.

JIM: *Well, how do the toys affect the comics? One of the things you always hear is, "You can't change the characters because it would affect the licensing." Is that true?*

PAUL: No, not really. Licensing has changed a lot in the past few years. I think that remark came mostly from an era when the two sides of the business never talked to each other. It was a case of, "the licensing people down the hall don't want to hear about changing the characters." But now we have a real dialogue back and forth.

JIM: *One of those rumors that go through the business every now and then is that DC is in trouble. So how's DC doing?*

PAUL: Happy, healthy — a very profitable little company. We're very proud of DC.

JIM: *I think that what started it was the newspapers were carrying the sale of Atari.*

PAUL: I suspect. The real problems Warner had with Atari have led to a great deal of unfounded speculation about other parts of the corporation. But DC has been very solid. We've got nothing but consistent support from the parent corporation.

JIM: *I think the old rumor used to be that Warner was very successful and could afford to carry things like DC. But that doesn't sem to be the case.*

PAUL: Never has been a matter of "carrying." We've been making a really positive contribution to the corporation for a number of years. The hardcore truth is that we are a successful company and Warner is happy with us. Warner has been behind us in everything, and God willing, that will go on for many, many years.

JIM: *Are you involved with the actual sales of the comics?*

PAUL: Sure.

JIM: *How are sales?*

PAUL: It hasn't been a bad year. Obviously the direct-sales market has tightened up somewhat, as the distributors and retailers adjust to the changes. But we're very content.

JIM: *When I interviewed Dick Giordano a little over a year ago, he referred to a marketing report which showed that the growth potential for direct sales comes to something like four-hundred percent.*

PAUL: Well, everybody has his own ideas about how far that market can be extended. We do think there's a lot of potential growth left to it.

JIM: *How is DC involved in helping the market realize that potential?*

PAUL: Well, it's hard, as a supplier, to be of *great* assistance in helping your retailers expand. We try to be supportive of them, but no one, to my knowledge, has come up with a successful program to help build the retailers. Mostly, that would mean risk-capital from people who want to succeed.

JIM: *If someone wants to open a comic-book store, would now be a good time?*

PAUL: I think it's a good time. The mar-

Ad for the SUPER POWERS toys that ran in many DC comics. "These toys," says Paul, "will have some marvelous effects, not just on DC, but on comics as a whole."

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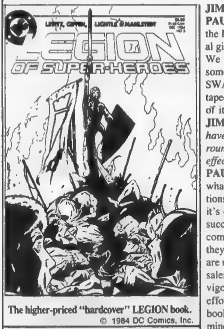
"You can't do anything effectively without



The higher-priced "hardcover" LEGION book.
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ket slowed somewhat in the past year, but we just went through a very large recession in this country. And yet we had a pretty low failure-rate among comic-book retailers selling comics. When you measure this against the statistics of any other new type of business, I think that's pretty impressive. There are still lots of new stores opening up. There are a lot of people making a living doing something that didn't exist ten years ago. I find that an incredibly impressive story, and I have a lot of admiration for the people involved.

JIM: *Retailing is a way for people who like comics as readers to make it their whole life — or a living — without becoming an artist, writer or editor.*

PAUL: Absolutely. But it is also a case of people seeing an opportunity and making something happen. And that's so exciting.

JIM: *A lot of comic-book publishers who weren't publishing super-hero material, such as Harvey and Gold Key, have more or less suspended publication. The market is very supportive of super-hero comics, but DC has been trying to get involved in other genres. Is that move being supported by marketing?*

PAUL: We're trying to — perhaps in some cases disproportionately so, because part of the job of marketing a book like SWAMP THING is to make people who wouldn't ordinarily buy it aware of how good a book it is. I think it's arguably the best book we're publishing now, yet it's selling, roughly, half as many copies as some of our best-sellers. So we have to put out a fair number of our dollars to promote it.

JIM: *In what way?*

PAUL: We featured it heavily in things like the DC SAMPLER, which is a promotional giveaway. We've got a poster campaign. We had **Alan Moore** come over here for some conventions, so we had the whole SWAMP THING crew together and we taped a good portion of it and made a video of it.

JIM: *Yeah, I noticed that this year there have been a lot of DC people making the rounds at conventions. Does that have any effect?*

PAUL: You can never exactly measure what does what. That's one of the frustrations of this business. But I'd like to believe it's one of the factors in making a book a success. We've had a lot of new people come on board in the last few years, and they've produced a lot of new comics that are more interesting...certainly to the direct-sales market. We've also been more vigorous in our marketing and promotional efforts. Which element is responsible for a book's success? Your guess is as good as mine. The average reader's guess is as good as mine. But as long as our efforts get us somewhere, that's terrific.

JIM: *What kind of goals do you set for yourself?*

PAUL: There are different goals for different areas of our business. What we try overall is to make the company a better business. That sounds very vague. When I inherited my present responsibility we had half of one person responsible for the marketing of our

Paul supervised DC's promotional campaign for SWAMP THING, which he calls "arguably our best title."

The regular "softcover" LEGION title.

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books. We now have five people. And we've gotten more specific about our advertising and promotion. We started to spend a lot more on it. We've gotten more sophisticated in our relationships with distributors and our retailers. We're now getting more aggressive on the ID side of it as well — spending more money there. That's almost a universal corollary. *(Laughter.)* You can't do anything effectively without spending time, energy and, ultimately, money. And each of these five people in each of these areas improves the company and takes it in a new direction. If I were doing any one of these jobs personally, I'd probably do it differently, but each of these people has their own interesting ideas, and leads us in a slightly different direction. I guess our overall goal is to be the best at what we do.

JIM: *Well, at one point, many, many years ago, DC was the number one company.*

PAUL: DC was number one, in terms of sales, from '38 or '39 to '72. Marvel's been outselling us domestically for only a fairly short amount of time. But I don't measure "best" solely in terms of sales. I'll be very happy if we're putting out a better line of comics — which we are now, but not by as wide a margin as I'd like. I'll be happy if we're doing our job better and making a better profit.

JIM: *Is there any new project that you're involved with that you think is going to have an overall impact on the company?*

PAUL: It's not really appropriate for me to reveal works-in-progress.

JIM: *How about something that's out now?*

PAUL: I think Flexographics is the most ex-

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spending time, energy and, ultimately, money."

citing thing to break this summer. I'm also very excited by the Kenner program. I think it will have some marvelous effects — not only on DC but on the comics business as a whole, because it'll get more young kids to look at comics again.

JIM: *Isn't DC publishing a line of comics for younger readers?*

PAUL: We have some work in development there.

JIM: *But nothing you can talk about?*

PAUL: Nothing to Dick's satisfaction yet. He's still perfecting it.

JIM: *I heard rumors of some weekly publication.*

PAUL: That's another project-in-progress. *(Laughter.)*

JIM: *Okay, I understand. Then let's talk about Jack Kirby coming back to DC.*

PAUL: One of the proudest statements I can make is that Jack's going to make more money from Darkseid and the New Gods than he did from the whole cast of characters he created for Marvel. When we made the decision to make Darkseid an important part of the DC line again, we got him on board consulting with us and doing some new design on some of the characters, and in return were able to see that he got a piece of the action — what he might have earned had he created the New Gods today. We were able to do that because so much new creative work was involved. We certainly had the option of getting someone to mimic Jack's work, but it was really exciting to get him involved again. We expect to hand him some extraordinarily- large-sized checks in the next couple of years.

JIM: *That's good to hear. Wayne Boring is also doing some new material?*

PAUL: A number of the old artists and writers are poking their heads in and saying, "Oh, boy — comics are really different."

JIM: *How about Jerry Siegel?*

PAUL: That would be fun. He's submitted some ideas from time to time. I saw Jerry last Wednesday. He's looking well.

JIM: *I thought it was interesting that the co-creator of SUPERMAN has been doing material as a back-up feature in an Eclipse comic.*

PAUL: It's nice to see people back in any part of the field. I obviously have proprietary feelings about DC, but most of all I'd like to see comics a healthy business. If Marvel Comics or Eclipse Comics does something wonderful, I think it's just nifty. I'm glad to see a new creative idea, wherever it comes from. I'm glad when there are more creative people in the business. I'm really glad to be in a business where people are coming into it, instead of getting out.

JIM: *How did you get involved with writing THE LEGION?*

PAUL: THE LEGION was probably my favorite comic book as a kid. When **Jim Shooter** went to Marvel — in 1976, I guesss — I took over the book from him. **Denny O'Neil** was editing it at the time. I stayed on it about two years, and had to give up the book in a fit of exhaustion. A couple of

Members of the Legion of Super-Scripters meet in their secret headquarters. From left to right: Paul Levitz, Don McGregor, Stan Lee, and Len Wein.

Photo: Art Dilwit

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Wildfire of the Legion of Super-Heroes pounds some sense into Titania of the Legion of Super-Villains, in the deluxe-format LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #2. Words by Paul Levitz, art by Keith Giffen and Larry Mahlstedt.

years ago, **Mike Barr**, who was editing it, talked me back on to it.

JIM: *Why did you give up the book when you did?*

PAUL: I was just awfully tired. It's difficult doing the writing and having a staff job at the same time. At that point, I'd just gotten too many commitments on my desk and had to give up most of them because it was all falling apart.

JIM: *And now you're doing two LEGION books a month?*

PAUL: Well, sort of. I'm working with **Mindy Newell** on the softcover book, doing some of the dialogue, and doing the three-part mini-series within the series. And it's also just one series, so it's under control. Years ago, I was doing three or four different assignments at the same time, which was much too much.

JIM: *Well, how do you handle that many characters?*

PAUL: Scorecards.

JIM: *How does that work?*

PAUL: I can't keep track of where all the characters are, at any given time. So a lot of the plotting is on little charts, along with the sub-plots and how they're evolving and where I last left the characters. Each time I do an issue I get out all my papers and sort it all out. Maybe there's somebody out there who could keep all this in their heads, but I sure can't.

JIM: *Are there any particular characters you prefer?*

PAUL: Nah — it varies with the story I'm doing. It's a cliche, but to some extent they do tend to write themselves.

JIM: *Do you do the plot first, and dialogue it from the pencils?*

PAUL: Yeah. I've done most of my stuff "Marvel style" for many years.

JIM: *Why is that?*

PAUL: When you're working with an artist whose aims are sympathetic to yours, you often do your best work that way. I work full script when I'm working with an artist who prefers that method, or when I'm working with an artist I don't know, or do know but don't necessarily agree with. It doesn't mean the artist is bad. He just has a different storytelling approach.

JIM: *You're working with two artists now?*

PAUL: Primarily with **Steve Lightle** who does the hardcover book, and a little bit with **Dan Jurgens**, who's doing the softcover.

JIM: *And how closely do you work with them?*

PAUL: Less so with both of them than with **Keith Giffen**, who was on the book previously. **Lightle** and I talk about once a month or so, kibbitzing about different ideas. I always feel comfortable with artists making changes with my plots and contributing ideas of their own. It becomes a game of "Can You Top This?"

JIM: *Are you still excited about THE LEGION?*

Also from LSH #2: close-ups of Legionnaires Element Lad, Cosmic Boy and the White Witch (top row); and Colossal Boy, Phantom Girl and Blok (bottom row).

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"What the Legion needs is a really *big*

Jack Kirby pencils of Darkseid. Will "the Big D" return for a rematch with the Legion?

PAUL: I certainly still enjoy doing it every month, although it's hard to find the time

JIM: *It seems to have evolved its own large following.*

PAUL: Yes, and they've stayed with it through good times and bad.

JIM: *What is the reason for its appeal?*

PAUL: Part of it is the sheer number of characters. There's enough diversity in it that everyone can see something in it that they want to see. Part of it is the fantasy of the future. The book has always had a feeling and a style all its own that set it apart from the rest of the marketplace.

JIM: *Which writers have influenced you?*

PAUL: Most of my writing style has evolved from **Roy Thomas** — his work on THE AVENGERS, particularly. And I've got a feeling it was shaped by the people I've worked with — **Joe Orlando**, and **Denny O'Neil**, to name two

JIM: *What kind of influences did you get from them?*

PAUL: It's hard to put it into simple terms. Denny was a blessing to me. He taught me to say more with less. Joe has the best storytelling imagination I've ever seen. He taught me, really, just how to "blue-sky" ideas and how to get enough idea content.

JIM: *How do you do that?*

PAUL: It really comes down to understanding your characters and just taking a logical extrapolation. Sounds very simple, but it's a complicated process. I'm not sure. If I could teach you in one paragraph, I'd patent it and make a fortune.

JIM: *Well, this may be another work-in-process, but what about DC UNIVERSE — CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS? Will that have an effect on THE LEGION storyline?*

PAUL: Oh, I think it's gong to have an effect on everything in our line. I haven't read it yet, but I know a couple of things they're doing to tie together with THE LEGION.

JIM: *But that's secret, too.* (Laughter.)

PAUL: Not so much "secret" as "in-progress."

(DC's publisher, Jenette Kahn, peeks in.)

JENETTE KAHN: Hi, Jim. I didn't recognize you at first. What happened to your beard?

JIM: *I shave every ten years.*

JENETTE: It makes your face look shorter. *(Laughter.)*

(Jenette exits.)

JIM: *Paul, you mentioned earlier the decision to make Darkseid play a more important part in the DC Universe. Was that in your mind when you were writing the LEGION stories with Darkseid in them?*

PAUL: No, the decision was made prior to that. I'm an old **Kirby** fan. I think he's one of the best, ever. The Legion's had a few

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villain, and Darkseid is kind of irresistible."

good villains, but they need a really *big* villain, and Darkseid's kind of irresistible. I'm very happy with those stories.

JIM: *So Darkseid's going to be around a while?*

PAUL: If not in the LEGION, somewhere.

JIM: *We've covered a wide range of topics -- your writing, your role in the busines end of the company, your goals, and so on. Speaking of DC in general, how would you sum it all up?*

PAUL: We're very pleased with our growth in the last couple of years. We think there's a tremendous distance yet to go, but we have some of the best people in our industry. As I said before, we want to be the best at what we do. We don't see any reason to settle for less.

George Perez depicts the Legion of Super-Heroines.

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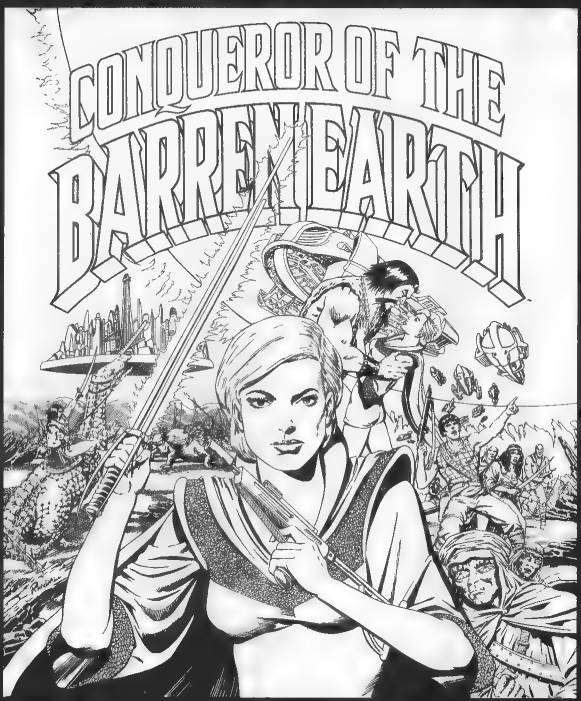
FROM THE PAGES OF THE WARLORD...



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"I like doing a book like THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES, where you can build a universe."

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Dan Jurgens

Occupation: Storyteller

Born: 27 June 1959 — Ortonville, Minnesota (Population 2000)

Residence: Minneapolis, Minnesota

Training: Minneapolis College of Art and Design, followed by advertising work.

Credits: WARLORD, BATMAN, SUN DEVILS, TEEN TITANS, TALES OF THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES

Favorite Comics (Past): BATMAN, THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES, FANTASTIC FOUR, SPIDER-MAN

Favorite Comics (Present): JON SABLE, AMERICAN FLAGG, SWAMP THING

Favorite President: Abraham Lincoln

Favorite Drink: Gin and Tonic

Favorite Movie: FANTASTIC VOYAGE

Favorite LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES Character: Ultra Boy

Hobbies and Interests: None, really, at present. When I was in college, comics were my hobby. Now that I'm in comics, it's time to find another hobby. So far, I haven't been able to find one. *(Laughter.)*

Dan takes to the high seas, during a much-needed respite from the drawing table.

DAN JURGENS

When Dan Jurgens was a fan, one of his favorite comics artists was Mike Grell, and one of his favorite comic books was THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES. Now a comics professional himself, Dan has followed in Mike Grell's footsteps by penciling THE WARLORD and has recently become the new artist for TALES OF THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES.

Does all this make Dan Jurgens' life a fan's dream come true? Not quite, as ye managing editor found out in a recent talk with this young and unassuming Midwesterner ...

BILL CHADWICK: *How did you come to be the TALES OF THE LEGION artist?*

DAN JURGENS: Last April I was in New York, visiting DC, and at that time I had pretty much resigned from THE WARLORD. I had been on the book for about two years and just couldn't see doing it any more. I was burnt out on WARLORD, and was just going to concentrate on SUN DEVILS. I got talking to some people who asked me, "What would you like to draw?" and I said how I wouldn't mind doing the LEGION some day. It wasn't long afterward that **Karen Berger** called me up and asked me if I would like to do it.

BILL: *When you say you were "burnt out"*

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DOG BOY

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FANS BEST FRIEND

"I find Conan a very boring character."

on WARLORD, do you mean you were dissatisfied with it or tired of it?

DAN: Well, it was actually a combination of a lot of things. First of all, WARLORD is not the right type of book for me to be working on anyway. I took it when it was assigned to me but it was not where my real interest lies. The book has such a strong presence of **Mike Grell**. It was always kind of a conflict — with myself, and with DC, too, I think — as to just how the book should be handled. As an artist you really want to push a story in your own direction, and at the same time, the book had been such a success as it was done by **Grell**, that there was always a conscious effort on DC's part to keep it that way — for example, they still wanted the double-page spread every issue on pages two and three.

BILL: *With the little box about what a dangerous place Skartaris is?*

DAN: Right. And that meant the storyline had to be built around the spread. There were a number of things wrong with it. For me, it just wasn't artistically satisfying enough to work on.

BILL: *You don't like sword-and-sorcery?*

DAN: Not much. I find CONAN a tremendously boring book and character. Sword-and-sorcery has just never interested me at all. Although WARLORD isn't true sword-and-sorcery, its subject matter was just not something I wanted to do.

BILL: *If WARLORD isn't your type of book, what would you say is?*

DAN: I like doing a book like THE LEGION or SUN DEVILS. Not necessarily group books, but where you can really build and design the universe of the book itself. In other words, if you take a book like SUPERMAN, you pretty much have, as a basic foundation, what you look at outside your window every day. With something like THE LEGION or SUN DEVILS, you're dealing with different races, different planets, different styles of architecture. You can really build a universe that you're working with for the entire book. That's what interests me a lot.

BILL: *Do you have any plans for building and designing the LEGION universe?*

DAN: **Keith Giffen** has done a really tremendous job of designing a universe for THE LEGION, right down to the home planets of the various Legionnaires. Keith came up with a design for every little facet of THE LEGION. And as a new artist, I can't just walk onto a book and change that over night. It would just be too radical. If I were going to be on it for a period of several years, then I could change it, bit by bit. So far I've agreed to do it for six issues. Beyond that, it's up in the air.

WITHIN THE VOID OF DEEP SPACE:
BRAINY, I'VE FOUND THEM!! YOUR MACHINE WORKED!!
ELEMENT LAD AND THE OTHERS ARE DOWN ON THAT PLANET! I'M SURE OF IT!!

From TALES OF THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #321: Dawnstar, soon to be the heroine of her own mini-series. Words by Mindy Newell, art by Jurgens and Kesel.

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Astronaut Mitch Cameron, on a space mission, is sucked into the ominous Enigma Cloud. What comes out is not a human being . . . nor Mitch Cameron but a powerful and deadly creature known as **BOLT**. Will **BOLT** save the world or destroy it?

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"I wish I had SUN DEVILS to do over again."

With something like SUN DEVILS, you have the opportunity to start from Square One and build the book's universe from the ground up. My problem was, when I started the SUN DEVILS, that I hadn't been in the business long enough to know how to do that. I wish I had it to do over again. A lot of working in comics, I think, is having confidence in what you're doing. I think everybody, when they start in the business, is a little hesitant to take chances, because if you've just been put on a book that someone else has been working on — like WARLORD — you have to look at what they did and borrow from them. Also, I think when you start working in the business, it takes a period of several years to find yourself, and until you've done that, I don't think you can really move in and create anything right away that's going to really have its own real strong sense of direction.

BILL: *Do you think that you've found yourself now?*

DAN: No, it's not like you wake up one day and decide, "Aha, this is it! Let's go set the world on fire!" I see myself developing and changing all the time. I look at something I did six months ago and know that I could do a better job of it today. In a way that's gratifying and in another way that's frustrating. Every time I see my work on the stands I have a tendency to say, "If only I could do it all over again!" But that's just part of gaining the experience that you need.

BILL: *Well, now that you've had a few years of experience as a comics professional, how would you evaluate yourself as an artist?*

DAN: One of the stronger things I see myself developing is my own style of storytelling. And now that I've started to write, that's something that's coming along even further — really thinking in terms of telling the story. One thing I want to improve on is just pure drawing skills. I don't think you could ever get too good. You sketch all the time, or take drawing classes.

BILL: *You are a big LEGION fan, correct?*

DAN: Yeah!

BILL: *Was that an important motivation to try to get on the book?*

DAN: It was. Another thing is that it was just the type of book I wanted to do at the time. So those two factors went hand in hand. When you're a fan and then get into comics professionally, there's a tendency to want to work on your favorite book because everybody wants to be able to work on the character they wanted to do when they were twelve or thirteen.

BILL: *When you were a young LEGION fan did you have any ideas of what you wanted to do with the book — and how do you see those ideas now, in terms of the reality of actually being the LEGION artist?*

--FZZT!-- FINALLY-- FZZT!-- TEAMMATES AFTER-- FZZT!-- COORDINA--FZZT!--
DAWNSTAR, COMMUNICATIONS ARE BREAKING DOWN AND HELM IS BUCKING, AS WELL.
IT'S IMPERATIVE THAT YOU STAY WITHIN VISUAL RANGE.
FZZT!-- IN!!

Brainiac (the good one), depicted by Jurgens and Kesel for LEGION #321. Words by Mindy Newell.

DAN: What I wanted to do ten or twelve years ago is a lot different from the reality of the situation now. The series itself has changed a lot in the past ten to thirteen years. A lot of characters have come and gone, and a lot of things have happened in the storyline. A lot of mistakes happen when someone comes on a book and ends up doing something they've wanted to do for a long time because the book was a fan favorite for them when they were young — although a positive example of that is THOR, where **Walt Simonson** has had these ideas burning inside him since he was a kid. That's great. But THE LEGION is a series that has changed so much that I don't think it would be realistic to try something like that. I have to take the book as it exists right now and try to work with it in that context, rather than what was happening with it fifteen years ago.

BILL: *Why do you think THE LEGION is such a perennial favorite?*

DAN: Well, when I was younger, I think one of the big plusses for me was that it was a book about young people. That was something I related to very strongly. Here's a bunch of kids — fifteen, sixteen years old — in a clubhouse kind of situation. I could identify with it. Beyond that, the fact that it takes place in the Thirtieth Century gives it a real flavor of fantasy and make-believe. If you take a SUPERMAN or BATMAN story and have Earth invaded by a bunch of aliens, you can only accept it to a certain degree, because every ten-year-old kid knows that isn't going to happen. But for some reason that kind of story is easier to accept if you're talking about Earth in the Thirtieth Century, with a number of different cultures and aliens already influencing the society.

BILL: *Is there anything in comics currently that you'd care to comment on?*

DAN: I think a lot of positive things are happening now with the independents and the alternatives, in terms of what they're trying to publish. About two or three years ago, when all this started to happen, I think people were expecting too much of the independents. A lot of people expected the creators to do what they wanted to do, and we'd have brilliant comic after brilliant comic. That was fairly unrealistic, and it has not really happened. Although it would be marvelous if it did! *(Laughter.)*

BILL: *Well, what would you like to see happen in comics?*

DAN: I'd like to see the marketplace stabilized, first of all, and beyond that, I'd like to see a marketplace that would allow for a number of different comics in different for-

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"I don't think you could ever get too good."

mats. Whether it's a sixty-cent newsprint comic, or a $5.95 graphic novel, I'd like to see a marketplace that would accept both of those and everything in between. And I think it's important that the marketplace find more readers, rather than just selling maybe two more books apiece to each of the readers already out there. Once we have a stabilized marketplace and expand it to include more readers, we will be able to do more things and publish different things in different directions and experiment a little bit more.

BILL: *Any future ambitions?*

DAN: It's funny, because my goals have been changing quite a lot ever since I came into the business. I would like to write more. Right now I have four months of commitment to some projects that I really want to get done.

BILL: *What's it like working with Paul Levitz, considering he's not just your writer but also a DC Vice-President?*

DAN: I really haven't worked with Paul enough at this point to really know what it's like. I've only done a couple of LEGION issues at this point, and only one of those was Paul's plot. Right now I'm in the middle of a three-part series which may or may not be spun off into a mini-series. It involves Dawnstar ending up on a planet of exiles.

The fact that Paul's a Vice-President really hasn't entered into it. The only time a Vice-President comes into consideration is when I find that **Dick Giordano** is inking something I did, then I always wish I'd done a better job drawing it. *(Laughter.)* I remember when I'd only been working at DC for a couple of months, I did a couple of BATMAN stories for **Len Wein**, and these were real quick fill-ins and they needed them in a hurry, so I did them right away. Then I found out after I'd handed them in that Dick was going to be inking them. Right away my reaction was, "Thanks for telling me now!" Because when you find out the Vice-President is going to be inking your work, you really wish it would have been the best job you could have done in your life.

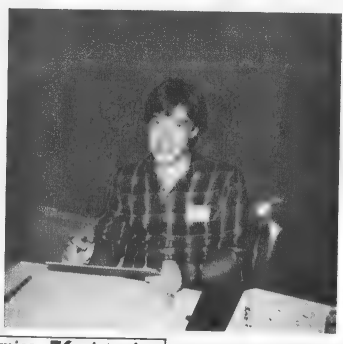
BILL: *Is your comics work keeping you very busy?*

DAN: Oh, yeah, definitely. You get to the point — at least this has been true of me, especially in the last couple of months — where all you really have time for is doing comics. My wife will come home from work and we'll sit down and have dinner, and then I'll start working again and work on throughout most of the night. That's when you realize, "Hey, it's time to move on to some other things to get me out of the house a little bit."

BILL: *I know you've said your early influences were more the "serious" illustrators more than comic-book or fantasy artists. Do you ever think you'd like to do any illustrating work besides comics?*

DAN: Right now I'm just looking to comics. Before I was in comics I was a graphic designer in advertising and that's something I really wouldn't care to get back into. The illustration end of it, I would. One of the things I've enjoyed seeing is **Bill Sienkiewicz** coming into comics and then starting to work in a more illustrative style. He expanded outside of comics and then pushed it back into comics and expanded his art even further. I think that's real nice to see and I'd like to be able to do that myself in a couple of years.

Above: Covers pencilled by Dan Jurgens and inked by Dick Giordano. Sometimes collaborating with Dick is a strain, as Dan explains in this interview.



"Sometimes," says Dan, "you get to the point where all you have time for is doing comics."

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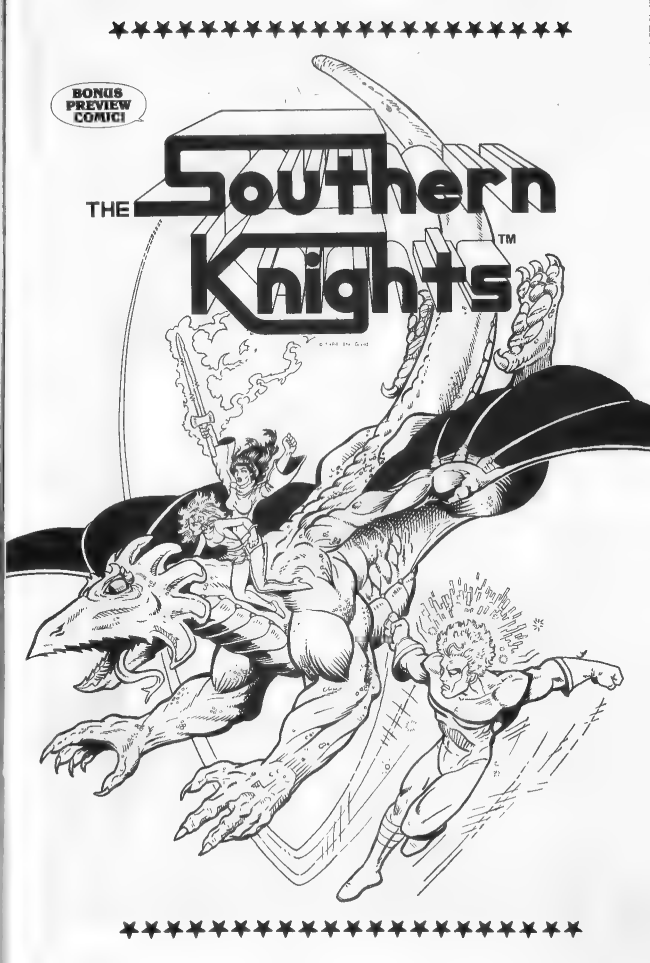

BONUS PREVIEW COMIC!
THE Southern Knights™

David Shenk — alias **Electrode** — Atlanta's first and foremost protector. **Connie Ronnin** — wielder of the psychic sword. **Dragon** — the last of his race, able to assume the human guise of Mark Dagon. **Kristin Austin** — petite, but endowed with incredible strength. Together, they are the **Southern Knights** !

HENRY & AUDREY VOGEL PLOT AND SCRIPT • CHUCK WOJTKIEWICZ PENCILS • STEVE KENT FINISHES • DAVID H. WILLIS LETTERS etc.

SUMMER IS WANING AND THE TREES ARE JUST BEGINNING TO HERALD THE ARRIVAL OF FALL. BUT, WARM WEATHER LINGERS AND THE KNIGHTS ARE MORE THAN WILLING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IT.
THIS WILL NOT BE A NORMAL DAY FOR THEM, HOWEVER. LYNDA LUCAS, A LOCAL REPORTER, HAS COME TO DO A FEATURE STORY ON THE SOUTHERN KNIGHTS.
IT'S WORTH IT! ALL THE WEIRD STUFF THAT'S GONE ON AROUND HERE LATELY— SUDDENLY, IT'S WORTH IT!
I HOPE THIS ISN'T TOO CASUAL FOR YOU?
OH, NO...

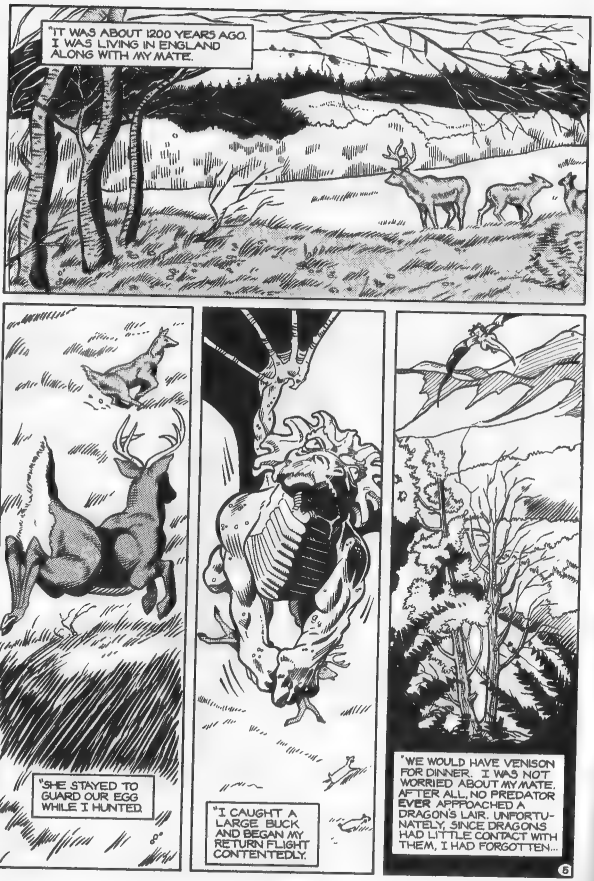
...NOT AT ALL! PEOPLE LIKE TO HAVE SOMETHING IN COMMON WITH HEROES. POOL PARTIES, BACK-YARD BARBEQUES - THEY ALL MAKE PEOPLE FEEL THEY KNOW YOU JUST A LITTLE BIT BETTER.
IT MAKES US MORE "HUMAN" TO THEM.
PRECISELY, MR. DAGON! THEY SEE THAT OTHER THAN YOUR POWERS, YOU'RE A MAN JUST LIKE EVERY- OOPS - I MEAN - UH...
RELAX, I KNOW WHAT YOU MEANT.

I WONDER WHAT SHE'S BLUSHING ABOUT.
SHE PROBABLY ASKED WHAT DRAGONS DID WITH THE MAIDENS THEY KIDNAPPED - AND HE PROBABLY TOLD HER.
DAVID!
2

FOLKS, THIS IS LYNDA LUCAS.
HELLO!
THIS IS CONNIE RONNIN, DAVID SHENK, AND ARAMIS MERROW.
I THOUGHT YOU ONLY HAD FOUR MEMBERS IN THE TEAM.

I'M NOT A MEMBER OF THE KNIGHTS- I MERELY LIVE HERE. IT IS A PLEASURE TO MEET YOU!
THANK YOU!
SMOOTH MOVE, KID!
OVER THERE IS BRYAN DANIELS, ALIAS THE WEED, SUPER HORTICULTURIST AND GROUNDS KEEPER SUPREME.
HIYA KID! HOW'RE YOU...
...DOOOWN...
IS HE ALWAYS SO SUAVE?
MOST OF THE TIME. OH YES, THAT'S KRISTIN AUSTIN.
KRISTIN, IF YOU WEREN'T EIGHTY OR NINETY TIMES STRONGER THAN ME...
WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO BEGIN? A DESCRIPTION OF OUR POWERS? THE ORIGIN OF THE GROUP?
ACTUALLY, I WANT TO LEARN SOMETHING ABOUT YOU AS PEOPLE FIRST AND HEROES SECOND.

WELL THEN, WHO SHOULD WE BEGIN WITH?
I'D LIKE TO START WITH MARK.
ME?
YES, YOU. FIRST OF ALL, WHY DO YOU LOOK SO MUCH LIKE TOM SELLECK?
ACTUALLY, I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT HE LOOKED LIKE ME! AFTER ALL...
"... I'VE HAD THIS GENERAL APPEARANCE SINCE I ASSUMED HUMAN FORM 1200 YEARS AGO.
"HOW DID YOU FIRST DISCOVER THAT ABILITY?
WELL...
TO THE SURPRISE OF HIS COMPANIONS, MARK IS HESITANT, SOMEWHAT UNSURE OF HIMSELF. IT DAWNS UPON THEM THAT HE HAS NEVER REALLY DISCUSSED HIS PAST.
I GUESS IT'S TIME I TOLD THE STORY TO SOMEONE...


"IT WAS ABOUT 1200 YEARS AGO. I WAS LIVING IN ENGLAND ALONG WITH MY MATE.
"SHE STAYED TO GUARD OUR EGG WHILE I HUNTED.
"I CAUGHT A LARGE BUCK AND BEGAN MY RETURN FLIGHT CONTENTEDLY.
"WE WOULD HAVE VENISON FOR DINNER. I WAS NOT WORRIED ABOUT MY MATE. AFTER ALL, NO PREDATOR **EVER** APPROACHED A DRAGONS LAIR. UNFORTUNATELY, SINCE DRAGONS HAD LITTLE CONTACT WITH THEM, I HAD FORGOTTEN...

...MAN!"
STAY HERE AND REMAIN QUIET!
"THERE WAS A VILLAGE AT THE BOTTOM OF OUR MOUNTAIN. WE LEFT IT ALONE - EVEN WENT GREAT DISTANCES TO HUNT TO LEAVE THEIR GAME UNDISTURBED."
WHEN THE WURM IS SUBDUED I WILL CALL YOU.
"IN RETURN, WE EXPECTED TO BE LEFT ALONE ALSO. WE WERE FOOLISH."
AS I SUSPECTED, SHE SLEEPS. NOW TO IMMOBILIZE HER.
"I DID NOT DISCOVER THESE EVENTS UNTIL LATER, BUT THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE I ARRIVED."
MORRIGAN, ACCEPT THIS SACRIFICE AND GRANT ME THE POWER I NEED TO DO YOUR WORK!
MY FOLLOWERS! THE BEAST IS SPELLED. COME QUICKLY!

"EAGERLY, THE VILLAGERS RUSHED TO DO THEIR LEADER'S BIDDING."
DESTROY THE FOUL BEAST!
QUICKLY, BEFORE IT'S MATE RETURNS!

"WITH THOSE FIRST BLOWS, I AM CERTAIN MY MATE AWOKE BUT, DUE TO THE DRUID'S SPELL, WAS UNABLE TO DEFEND HERSELF...

"...OR OUR EGG."
I'LL SCRAMBLE THIS EGG!
WELL DONE ALTAIN!

MORRIGAN! RECEIVE THIS WURM AS A SACRIFICE FROM YOUR FAITHFUL SERVANT!
"IN THE DARKENED CAVERN THE MYSTICAL BLADE GLOWED BRIGHTLY, POISED TO STRIKE. AROUND MY MATE THE VILLAGERS QUIETLY WATCHED...

...AS THE SWORD DESCENDED."
IT IS DONE!
"MERCIFULLY, SHE DIED THEN.

YES! I CAN FEEL THE POWER FLOWING INTO ME! COURSING THROUGH MY BODY WAITING TO BE HARNESSED AND PUT TO WORK! YOUR WORK, MORRIGAN!
GODDESS, YOUR HUMBLE SERVANT THANKS YOU FOR THIS BOON! PRAISE BE TO MORRIGAN!
"THE VILLAGERS OBSERVED IN SILENT AWE. AWE INSTILLED PARTIALLY BY THE DRUID BUT DUE MOSTLY TO THE ENORMITY OF THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENT THAT DAY. THEY HAD SLAIN A DRAGON!"

"BY THE TIME I RETURNED..
"...ALL WAS QUIET. THERE WAS NOTHING TO INDICATE ANYTHING WAS WRONG...
"...UNTIL I LOOKED INTO THE CAVE."
NO!
"THE CARNAGE WAS AWFUL. THE PUDDLED REMAINS OF OUR EGG SLOWLY MIXING WITH MY M-MATE'S B-B-BLOOD."
W-WOULD YOU EXCUSE ME FOR A MOMENT?

INTERLUDE ONE:
THIS GEOTHERMAL RESEARCH CENTER IS THE FRONT FOR VIPER'S WEAPONS FACILITY?
YES MA'AM. THE GEOTHERMAL PART IS 100% LEGIT. MOST OF IT'S EMPLOYEES DON'T EVEN KNOW ABOUT THE UNDERGROUND LABS.
DOCTOR COLBY, ONE OF THE NATION'S TOP GEOTHERMAL MEN, IS THE ADMINISTRATOR FOR THE ENTIRE COMPLEX. HE'LL BE MEETING YOU WHEN WE LAND.
AFTER LANDING, THE WOMAN ACCOMPANIES DOCTOR COLBY THROUGH THE SURFACE FACILITY TO THE LARGER, MORE COMPLEX ONE HIDDEN BELOW.
VERY IMPRESSIVE, DOCTOR COLBY, BOTH -uh- DEPARTMENTS LOOK QUITE GOOD.
THANK YOU, MS. HOLCUM. I'M QUITE PROUD OF BOTH OF THEM. DID YOU KNOW WE JUST RECEIVED A GEOTHERMAL RESEARCH GRANT FROM THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION?
YES, SERPENT PERSONALLY ASKED ME TO CONGRATULATE YOU FOR HER. HOW GOES THE WORK ON THE POWERSUITS?
I'LL LET OUR MAN IN CHARGE OF THAT TELL YOU HIMSELF.
4 INVENTED BY DAVID SHENK IN S.K. #4
I SHOULD WARN YOU THAT DOCTOR CARTER IS A BIT... ECCENTRIC.
CYBERNET APPLICATIONS
VIPER ISN'T INTERESTED IN ECCENTRICITIES, JUST...
...RESULTS?
I HATE TO SAY I TOLD YOU SO BUT,
BE RIGHT WITH YOU, JUST NEED TO GET A FEW MORE READINGS.
10

THIS IS WHERE THE SUITS ARE ACTUALLY PUT TOGETHER.
YOU'RE DOING EXCELLENT WORK, DOCTOR CARTER.
ME? I'M JUST A TINKERER. THE GUY WHO DESIGNED THE SUIT IS A GENIUS!

THESE ARE THE ONLY FULLY TESTED MODELS.
THE ONE ON THE LEFT WAS BUILT FOR SPEED - IT'S EVEN HIT MACH ONE! THE OTHER HAS GREATLY INCREASED FIREPOWER - INCLUDING AN ARMOR PIERCING MINI-CANNON!
THIS ALL LOOKS VERY GOOD! HOW LONG BEFORE YOU CAN DELIVER TEN MODIFIED SUITS?
A MONTH, MAYBE A LITTLE MORE.

SEVERAL HOURS OF TOURING LATER, CARTER ACCOMPANIES MS. HOLCUM TO THE HELIPAD.
ARE YOU SURE YOU WON'T JOIN ME FOR DINNER?
AFRAID SO, JAMES. I'VE GOT TO GET BACK TO THE OFFICE AND GIVE MY REPORT. I'M SURE SERPENT WILL BE PLEASED WITH YOUR PROGRESS!
THAT'S NICE, CYN, BUT IT STILL DOESN'T HELP ME GET A DATE FOR DINNER!
MAYBE, NEXT TIME. BYE!
END INTERLUDE ONE.

There's only one place in the world to find out WHAT HAPPENS NEXT--as well as WHAT WENT BEFORE--
SOUTHERN KNIGHTS #8

NOW PUBLISHED BY FICTIONEER BOOKS LTD!

Southern Knights™

IF YOU'VE NEVER READ SOUTHERN KNIGHTS-- THIS IS THE ISSUE FOR YOU!

• One of the little-known pleasures in comics is a super-hero comic featuring good but not unspectacular heroes and one extremely good and spectacular hero: Dragon. Dragon is *not* a man who can turn into a dragon but a dragon who can disguise himself as a man.

The group, and the comic in which they appear, is called *Southern Knights*, and there have been seven issues so far It's a very good super-group, a comic I always enjoy reading.

In issue #7, a back-up series called "Missing Beings" begins, written by Henry Vogel and drawn by Bill Neville It's off to a very promising start and Bill's art is excellent, making *Southern Knights* even more worthwhile. Check it out.

--Don Thompson
THE COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE
October 26, 1984

THIS 64-PAGE SUPER-SIZE ISSUE TAKES YOU FROM THE ORIGIN TO TODAY--

PLUS AN ALL-NEW 23-PAGE ADVENTURE!

EXTRA! A NEW CHAPTER OF "MISSING BEINGS!"

ON SALE IN FEBRUARY

Now's your chance! Use this self-contained SPECIAL ISSUE to introduce yourself to SOUTHERN KNIGHTS! There's 33 pages of ALL-NEW material — plus a COMPLETE RECAP of the first 7 issues, making this the PERFECT issue to pick up on the SOUTHERN KNIGHTS storyline starting NOW!

The all new lead story presents the ORIGIN OF DRAGON! It's the tale of how DRAGON, our most popular character, discovered his ability to assume human form. The tale is by HENRY VOGEL, with pencils by CHUCK WOJTKIEWICZ and inks by STEVE KENT! If you remember how SENSATIONAL the cover for SOUTHERN KNIGHTS #7 looked — just WAIT 'til you see THIS cover in FULL PROCESS COLOR!

In the second installment of our new back-up feature, MISSING BEINGS, Tristan and company begin their attempt to rescue a woman who was "Shanghaied" to a mining colony. Written by HENRY VOGEL with art by BILL NEVILLE, this series should interest all science fiction fans.

Due to the higher page count, the cover price for issue #8 will be $2.25 (for this one extravaganza issue only). Use it to introduce yourself to the wonderful world of SOUTHERN KNIGHTS — you WON'T be sorry! You will be GRATEFUL for being introduced to what will soon become one of your FAVORITES!

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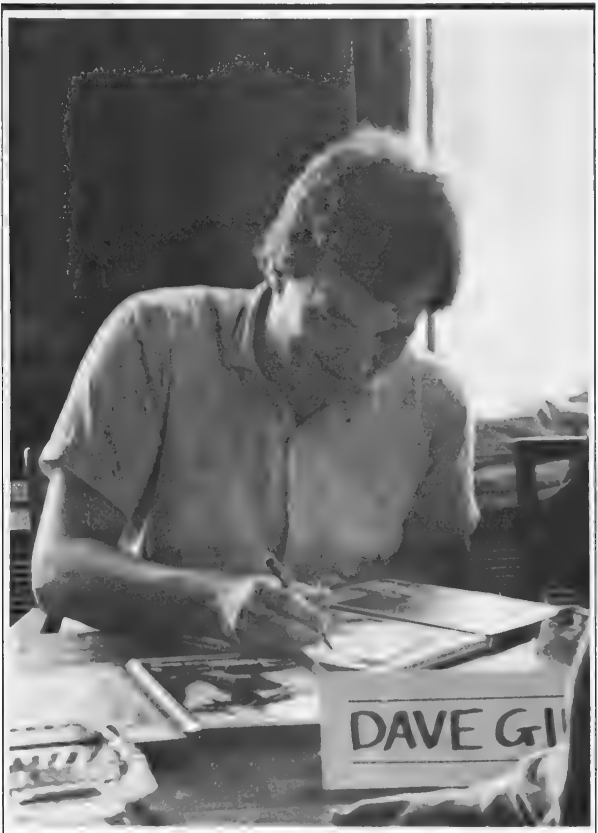
"In Britain, comics are kind of a shameful operation.



I like the sense of excitement about American comics."

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DAVE GIBBONS

Acclaimed in his native Britain for his work on "Rogue Trooper" (the popular future-war strip in IPC's weekly SF comic, 2000 AD) artist Dave Gibbons also drew the DOCTOR WHO series for Marvel's British division, and during this past year gained the attention of American fans as a result of his GREEN LANTERN collaborations with Len Wein. While editing Marvel's new DOCTOR WHO book, which will reprint the British strips for all the Doctor's fans here in the States, Jim Salicrup was so impressed by Gibbons' art that he made a mental note to interview him the next time Dave visited New York City. Just recently, Jim looked up from his desk, and lo! — standing before him was none other than the young, genial gent from Great Britain, himself, fresh from the BOAC terminal in Kennedy Airport. Jim persuaded Dave to hang around the Marvel Bullpen after hours for the following informal, humor-leavened chat about DOCTOR WHO, the comparative merits and flaws of British and American comics, Dave's departure from GREEN LANTERN, and his contribution to one of the least-known — but most controversial — comics ever published . . .

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Dave Gibbons
Occupation: Artist
Born: London, England
Training: Comics art, self-taught. Studied and practiced surveying before becoming a full-time comics professional.
Credits: GREEN LANTERN, DOCTOR WHO, "Rogue Trooper" in 2000 AD.
Pet Peeve: Being asked what my pet peeve is.

JIM SALICRUP: *You worked on a controversial and unusual African superhero comic. Could you tell us about that?*

DAVE GIBBONS: Yes, the article about that in COMICS JOURNAL irked me at the time, and I'd like to set the record straight. My agent was approached by a company in Nigeria. They wanted to do a black version of SUPERMAN without having to pay the people who created SUPERMAN. It was called POWER MAN. Probably they should have paid Marvel something. *(Laughter.)* It was

"COMICS JOURNAL accused Brian Bolland and me

POWERMAN IS AN AFRICAN HERO WHO HAS TERRIFIC STRENGTH AND SUPERHUMAN POWERS. NOTHING CAN HARM HIM EXCEPT THE BITE OF A SNAKE. A BOLT OF LIGHTNING STRUCK HIM WHEN HE WAS A CHILD AND GAVE HIM SPECIAL POWERS. THE LIGHTNING ALWAYS CALLS HIM WHEN DANGER IS NEAR.
THE LIGHTNING HAS COME TO WARN ME THAT A TERRIBLE DANGER THREATENS MAIN CITY TONIGHT!
PERIL FROM THE SKY!
© 1975 Pilot Publications

POWERMAN: a racist comic? Words by Donne Avenell, art by Dave Gibbons.

drawn by **Brian Bolland** and myself in tandem. Every month we would do fourteen pages each, although sometimes it took Brian longer than a month. I shouldn't say that. *(Laughter.)* I forgot the names of the writers, but they were fairly standard British comics writers, scripting for a Nigerian audience. Apart from appearing in Nigeria, it also was reprinted in South Africa. The article in COMICS JOURNAL said that this was a British comic that appeared in South Africa solely to perpetuate *aparthеid.* It accused Brian and I, although not by name, of doing something faintly evil. But what we actually did wasn't evil at all. Obviously, with anything that's reprinted, the context in which it's reprinted is really out of control of the artist. The only time we had a Caucasian character, he was an extremely unsavory character, a land developer called Boss Blitzer. So our consciences are clear on any grounds of racism.

JIM: *Didn't that lead to your work on "The Harlem Heroes?"*

DAVE: Yes. My agent was approached by IPC Magazines, which was publishing what was to become the weekly, 2000 AD. They had a strip called "The Harlem Heroes," which was a futuristic version of the Harlem Globetrotters. It was black people flying through the air and they saw I could draw black people flying through the air. *(Laughter.)*

JIM: *Your specialty.*

DAVE: IPC had a lot of trouble with this series. They'd had three or four artists who couldn't get the equipment right. You see, the Harlem Heroes don't play basketball but "jet-ball," and they had to be quite well-armored, with crash helmets, and jet-packs, and they had to have something around their waist which had control buttons. I figured they should get some extra protection, so I gave it to them, in the form of a fetching codpiece. *(Laughter.)* And that turned out to be just what the editors wanted. So I drew that for maybe the first twenty-five issues of 2000 AD. Then I did a strip called "Dan Dare," who's a fairly legendary British comic character. And I did that for another fifty issues.

JIM: *Well, how did you get involved with DOCTOR WHO?*

DAVE: Dez Skinn, who now publishes WARRIOR, but who was then with Marvel UK, told me about it. The original idea was that **Paul Neary**, who was sort of the in-house cover designer and layout man for Marvel's UK operation, would pencil DOCTOR WHO, and I would ink it. This would still give me time to continue doing 2000 AD. However, while I wanted to do DOCTOR WHO, I didn't want to do it in that sort of half-hearted piecemeal way. I wanted to do it full time. **Pat Mills** and **John Wagner**, who were IPC's leading writers and who created 2000 AD, had submitted stories to the BBC for the DOCTOR WHO TV series in the past, and I thought they might be able to salvage some of this work by writing the DOCTOR WHO strip. **Dez Skinn** was very pleased with this idea and they agreed to do it.

of doing something evil, but our consciences are clear."

JIM: *Were you a fan of the TV show?*

DAVE: I was a fan of it for the first couple of years or for however long it was that **William Hartnell** was the Doctor. He played him as a very crusty old man and that appealed to me. I can remember the first Dalek story.

JIM: *Over here DOCTOR WHO has an avid following, with a pretty organized fandom — they're holding conventions, they're publishing their own fanzines. Is it like that in England, or is DOCTOR WHO just another TV show?*

DAVE: It's a British institution and people of all ages watch it. In Britain a fairly modest TV show which, after all, DOCTOR WHO is — I mean, it doesn't even have the special effects of, say, the early STAR TREK — will capture the hearts of the British people, and they'll stay with it through thick and thin. DOCTOR WHO had been running twenty years.

JIM: *Have there been DOCTOR WHO conventions in London?*

DAVE: Some. I don't keep up closely with DOCTOR WHO fandom, but there was a huge DOCTOR WHO anniversary celebration in one of Britain's most stately mansions, where all the actors alive who have played Doctor Who turned up and there were exhibitions of props and costumes and stills and so on from the TV show, and I believe that they got an attendance in the tens of thousands.

JIM: *Let's go back to your beginnings. When did you become interested in comic books?*

FREEFALL WARRIORS
COOL BREEZE
THE LATEST DEVELOPMENT IN BIO-ENGINEERING FROM THE LABORATORIES OF INTRA-VENUS INC., BUT UNKNOWN TO THE EXECUTIVES OF THAT COMPANY, AN EXTRA FACTOR HAD BEEN BUILT INTO THIS ANDROID'S GENETIC CODE — THE "SOUL" FACTOR!
BIG CAT
THE FREE-FALL WARRIORS' MAXIMUM LEADER. ORIGINALLY A MERCENARY FLIER, LEADER OF THE HELLCAT'S FLIGHT — HE'S CAPRICIOUS, VICIOUS AND VINDICTIVE. ONE QUALITY SETS HIM APART FROM HIS HUMAN COUNTERPARTS... HE CAN SEE IN THE DARK!

Promotional material for FREEFALL WARRIORS, a new series created by Steve Parkhouse and Dave Gibbons.

DAVE: I can remember being taken to Woolworth's at the age of seven by my grand-dad and seeing a SUPERMAN comic which I still have in my possession. It was by **Al Plastino**, with a cover showing Superman in a cave with a hoard of treasure. That was the first time I became aware of Superman. And after that, my other grand-dad, who helped out in a newsagent's — newsstand, you would say — used to send me copies every week, or every month, however often they came out. And my cousin knew somebody inside a US Air Force Base, so he would also get copies of U.S. comics, read them himself, and send them on to me.

JIM: *So when did you become interested in drawing?*

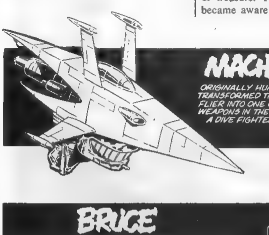
DAVE: My father used to draw when he was a kid. I've got stuff in my cupboard that he drew in school, probably when he was seven or eight, and it was like a comic for the rest of the class. He'd stick it up on the wall and they'd read it. He later went on to become involved in architecture and town planning, but I can always remember him doing doodles and things like that. So I always drew, and there were always pencils and Indian ink and stuff like that around the house.

JIM: *Your parents were very supportive of your drawing?*

DAVE: In as much as I was enjoying myself, yes, but not when it came to making a career out of it.

JIM: *When did you begin thinking of drawing comics as a professional?*

DAVE: Given the kind of material I


MACHINE HEAD
ORIGINALLY HUMAN, MASSIVE IMPLANTS TRANSFORMED THIS OPERATIONAL HIGH FLIER INTO ONE OF THE MOST DEVASTATING WEAPONS IN THE INTRA-VENUS ARMOURY - A DIVE FIGHTER OF MARWORLD!
BRUCE
PRODUCT OF THE SURGEON-SCULPTORS OF RUBICON, THIS SHARK-FACED WEIRDO STARTED LIFE AS A "SUB-SWIMMER," CAVORTING THE LOWER STRATAS OF SUB-SPACE AND POUNCING ON VICTIMS AS THEY PASSED. IN SHORT, A PIRATE. ONCE WRECKED ON THE PLANET MAHMOUD AND RAISED TO DEITY STATUS BY STUNNED ABORIGINES, HE WAS BESTOWED UPON HIM THE GIFT (OR CURSE) OF INVULNERABILITY IN BATTLE. SEEMS TO HAVE HELD GOOD SO FAR.

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DUNE

MARVEL SUPER SPECIAL™ #36

Based on the film presented by Dino De Laurentiis.
Produced by Raffaella De Laurentiis.
Directed by David Lynch.
From the novel by Frank Herbert.

On Sale in December.

by Ralph Macchio and Bill Sienkiewicz

new from MARVEL

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"I thought I could do better than Barry Smith!"

wanted to do — the super-heroes and science-fiction of American comics — it didn't seem that there was any way anyone from rural England could ever, ever do it. So I shelved my artistic career for a while and became a surveyor, which was a strange parallel to what my dad did. And probably it wasn't until I was twenty or twenty-one, probably spurred by dissatisfaction with what I was doing, that I thought — almost out of desperation — perhaps I could draw American comics. The pivotal thing that made me think, "Yes, there might be a career for me in comic art," was the issue of NICK FURY: AGENT OF S.H.I.E.L.D. that **Barry Smith** drew. And I realized that **Barry Smith** was British — it perhaps said something in the comic, like "Here's this new artist over from England." I really thought I could do better than what **Barry Smith** had done!

JIM: *Well, at that stage, maybe you could have.*

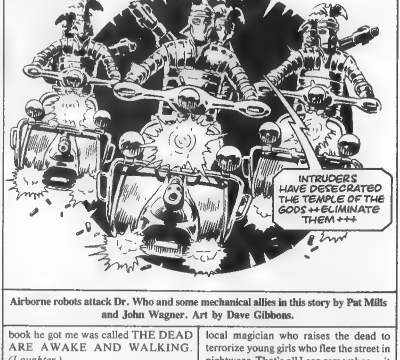
DAVE: What I did was draw the entire issue that **Barry Smith** had done, in my style, and when I did it I realized that perhaps I *couldn't* do it better than **Barry Smith** could. *(Laughter.)* But I became hooked by the idea that it just might be possible for an English kid to make it in American comics. **Dez Skinn** put out fanzines but also worked as an assistant editor for IPC Magazines. **Dez Skinn** looms large in the legend of **Dave Gibbons.** *(Laughter.)* I started doing things for Dez's fanzines, and he also got me work lettering and doing things like that, and that was how I got embarked on what became a full-time comics career.

JIM: *What was it like, working with Dez?*

DAVE: Working with Dez . . . that's a difficult one. *(Laughter.)* He's a hard taskmaster. He'd never let anything go by if it wasn't what he wanted. I suspect that he gave me a bit of a complex about not delivering what was asked for. Now, of course, he'd be pleased to have me work for him. *(Laughter.)* At last.

JIM: *At that point, were you seriously considering working in comics as a career?*

DAVE: I'd finished my studies as a surveyor — it entails four or five years of study, and exams, and all that — and took a nice, long holiday, and after I came back I decided, "I'm not going to be a surveyor, I'm going to be a comics artist!" My stuff in the fanzines had come to the attention of an agent. We have quite a few art agents over in Britain, which is rather an unusual thing here in the U.S. This agent felt he could get me work, and the first



Airborne robots attack Dr. Who and some mechanical allies in this story by Pat Mills and John Wagner. Art by Dave Gibbons.

book he got me was called THE DEAD ARE AWAKE AND WALKING. *(Laughter.)*

JIM: *A love story.*

DAVE: Gorgeous young girl goes to stay with wicked relation. Gorgeous young girl dies. Wicked relation is in league with

local magician who raises the dead to terrorize young girls who flee the street in nightwear. That's all I can remember — it was lots of corpses and lots of underwear. The job didn't exactly enhance my status as a draftsman. I had to go back being a surveyor again.

JIM: *How was surveying?*

DAVE: Okay. The advantage of being a surveyor is that you sit at a drawing board and draw, and I like the act of drawing.

JIM: *Did you find it helped when it came to drawing comics?*

DAVE: Oh, yeah. Some artists find backgrounds difficult — what's a window look like and how big should the door be? I mean, I could make you a window, if I had the tools. The discipline of technical drawing certainly helped as far as lettering was concerned.

JIM: *You made quite a mark in British comics with "Rogue Trooper." How did that start?*

DAVE: By that time, I had drawn about seventy issues — probably about three years' worth — of DOCTOR WHO, and when it became a monthly and I had some spare time, 2000 AD asked me if I wanted to work on a new war strip for them, because apparently a readers' poll indicated that this was what the readers wanted to see — death and destruction, and dislike of your fellow man, set in a

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"All I can remember of my first comics job is lots of corpses and lots of underwear."

future century. *(Laughter.)* I was particularly captivated at that time by the reprints of TWO-FISTED TALES, and I had also liked **Archie Goodwin**'s BLAZING COMBAT. I knew there was a way you could do a war comic and have lots of science-fiction elements in it, but still not do just a gung-ho **John Wayne** kind of story. So I set about visually creating the character who was to become Rogue Trooper, and we thrashed the whole concept out, but unfortunately, the script and the general direction of the story weren't quite what I had envisioned, so after only probably a dozen issues, I relinquished "Rogue Trooper." But it continues, to this day, probably the most popular thing in the paper, next to "Judge Dredd."

About that time I got a call from **Nick Landau** who had been in contact with **Dick Giordano** and **Joe Orlando** of DC Comics. They were in Britain looking for new talent, to expand the DC line. So they got in touch with me, and **Mick McMahon**, and **Kevin O'Neill** and a few others, and convinced us we should be drawing DC Comics. It hit me at the right time. I had been doing DOCTOR WHO for about three years, and I was still enjoying the character, but I thought maybe the change would be nice. Certainly, what they were offering me was a far better deal than anything that was obtainable in Britain. You know, in Britain, to this day, you don't get your original artwork back from IPC Magazines, and there's no possibility of reprint money or royalties. The creators of "Judge Dredd," for example, haven't received a penny from it, other than what they were paid for the artwork or the script at the time, and whatever "good will" money they got from the Titan editions. So, to work for a company which did give your artwork back, did give you reprint money, did give you some possibility of royalties, and even provided you with the board you were to draw on, was too good a thing to refuse. So I talked to the chaps, and for the past few years, I've been working — quite happily, thank you *(laughter)* — for DC.

JIM: *You mentioned Mills and Wagner, earlier. I've never met them, even though we're reprinting their stories. What can you tell me about them?*

DAVE: They're somewhat in the league of being phenomena. They created titles for IPC because someone recognized that here were two talents who could give them something different from what had been done before. **John Wagner** created BATTLE, which was a somewhat different approach to the somewhat standard British anthology comic, in that rather than being a comic containing a variety of stories, some about war, some about sports or whatever, BATTLE was exclusively about war — World War II. And it was very successful indeed, because now, rather than a kid having to buy a comic with three pages of war, they can now buy a comic where they can get twenty-four or thirty pages of war.

JIM: *More war!* (Laughter.)

DAVE: Of course, war has always been a good seller in Britain because we were more involved in it, or more geographically close to it, and it's still part of the mythos of the British Empire, I suppose. John and Pat also had a great hand in a comic called ACTION, which was to the average British comic what, say, DIRTY HARRY is to THE STREETS OF SAN FRANCISCO. In other words, it went that one step further. And it did, in fact, run into a lot of censorship problems. But it advanced the idea of what you could and couldn't do in comics a great deal. ACTION showed you could do things in comics

One of Dave's first American assignments: illustrating a Creeper story for THE FLASH #319. Words by Carl Gafford.

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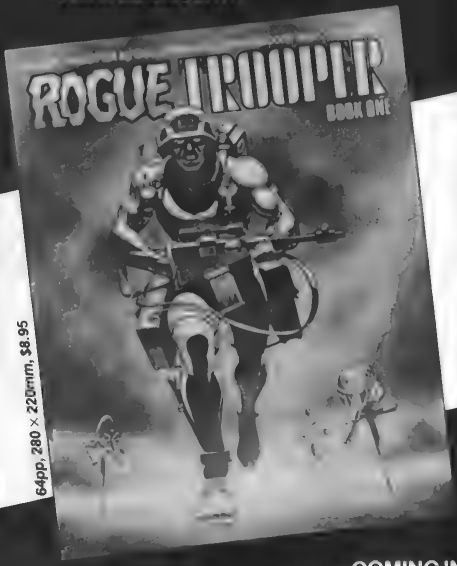

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"I didn't want to do DOCTOR WHO in a half-hearted way. It's a British institution."

that are as exciting as the latest films or the latest TV programs.

2000 AD was created by **Pat Mills**, in conjunction with another IPC editor, to be similar to BATTLE, in that where once you bought a comic for two or three pages of science fiction, you could now buy a comic containing *all* science fiction. They brought in a lot of new people, because there were very few British comic artists at the time who could do the sort of flashy art that they wanted. They managed to get in the first wave of British fandom who had turned professional — myself, **Brian Boland, Mick McMahon, Kevin O'Neill** — so they were very crucial in the development of new British talent.

JIM: *In the U.S., 2000 AD is best known for featuring "Judge Dredd."*

DAVE: John Wagner had a big hand in the creation of "Judge Dredd," and in the continued success of it. He took the concept and really made it memorable. I'm sure, when the history of comics is written, that "Judge Dredd" will rank right up there as one of the all-time original comics creations.

Personally speaking, **Pat Mills** is a very talkative, excitable Englishman, and **John Wagner** is a very dour Scotsman, a man of few words. When you're working on a story with Pat, he tends to phone you up and get very excited about what he wants to do, and you get very excited as well, and throw in new ideas. Pat also sends you a strip with several options of how you could approach things, along with pages ripped from very expensive books to show you images of what he wants, and notes longer than the script itself. **John Wagner**, on the other hand, speaks to you in a calmer way about what he wants, writes a very terse script that's like a series of exciting telegrams. He leaves a lot of visuals up to the artist and his words are so well-chosen they're a joy to draw.

JIM: *Did they collaborate on the DOCTOR stories Marvel is publishing?*

DAVE: Well, the reason why the DOCTOR WHO stuff is jointly credited to **Mills** and **Wagner** is that the synopses that they submitted to the BBC, on which the comic scripts are based, had been developed in conference. The DOCTOR WHO stories were a mixture of both their ideas. But the actual scripts were written by Pat and John individually.

JIM: *Did you have any difficulty in drawing anything?*

DAVE: In American comics, the way things are going, some artists will spend their whole careers only being asked to draw super-heroes in either quasi-realistic settings or wildly fictional settings, and never have to dwell much on reality. But in British comics, because their staples tend to be kid's school stories, World War II stories or sports stories, you have to be able to draw extremely realistic things. The first editor I worked with asked me, "Could you draw a policeman standing outside a phone box?" And I said, "Hmm — I don't think I could!" But that's the kind of thing you have to draw in

Dr. Who gets a surprise on a planet that's one, huge library, in this Mills and Wagner story illustrated by Dave Gibbons.

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"In Britain, there's a pressure to expel anybody

On this page and opposite: covers by Dave Gibbons. Above: GREEN LANTERN #174. Opposite: DOCTOR WHO #7.

British comics. In doing a strip like DOCTOR WHO, the fact that I learned to draw real backgrounds helped me give a certain authenticity to even outlandish backgrounds. Quite frankly, the easiest thing in the world is just to put down whatever fancy comes into your head. The artists I respect are the people who can draw — to use my example — the policeman outside the phone box, and make *that* look exciting.

JIM: *You mentioned that you trained to become a surveyor. Did you have any other formal art training?*

DAVE: No, I really learned by copying comics.

JIM: *That's surprising, considering that you draw so well.*

DAVE: Well, you don't know how many comics I copied! *(Laughter.)* But I drew with what one would call professional equipment all the time. I would always like to draw with a pen rather than with a crayon. I remember probably on my twelfth birthday or something getting a book, HOW TO DRAW CARTOONS, which made me realize, yes, you had to do pencilling, and this is what pencilling should look like. Your pencils should be clear and clean, and the inking should be well-considered and concise. I think everybody is born with artistic talent, but it's like a war of attrition — how far you can go until you give up or become discouraged. And I think I was lucky in the sense that I didn't become discouraged. I was always getting somewhere. I did do a few life-drawing classes. In fact, as a point of trivia, I went to evening classes in the town where I live, and our life-model was **Quentin Crisp**, the well-known homosexual.

JIM: *He lives in New York.*

DAVE: He does. And, oddly enough, he was also the life-model for a lot of **Barry Smith**'s early training — so hello, **Barry**, wherever you are. *(Laughter.)* The hours I've actually spent drawing from life you could probably count on — if not the fingers of one hand — the fingers of two hands. But I do love art instruction books. I probably have fifty books on anatomy, on how to draw, on composition, color, and pen-and-ink techniques. Over the past twenty years I taught myself from such works.

JIM: *Many people learn to draw merely from the work of other comic-book artists, but those artists are usually pretty easy to spot, in that they will latch on to mere surface stuff, like a rendering style —*

DAVE: Yeah.

JIM: *— but if you look closely, they'll get the basic drawing wrong. The characters will be out of proportion, or even a simple head will have the eyes too high up.*

DAVE: Well, I know my own appreciation of drawing has changed over the years. I think you start off just fascinated by surface detail. But the more I progress, the less I worry about what marks I make, and the more I worry about the composition, and the drama that's inherent in the way you set up a scene. I get more and more concerned about the big shapes, and less and less concerned about the tiny lines. Copying other artists is not a bad thing to do, as long as you know what you're doing — and I'm not so sure I knew what I was doing. *(Laughter.)* If you want to draw like **Neal Adams**, don't copy the little marks that he makes on the noses and cheeks. Get a piece of tracing paper, and put it over the art, and with a big, clumsy implement — so you're not tempted to

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"Doing comics is like a war of attrition."

reproduce the fine lines — draw the big shapes and find out how he draws the big shapes. If you look at **Will Eisner**, for example, you'll find that behind the beautiful brushwork, the plastic shapes that are in there tell the story by themselves. That is what I try to do when I look at other artists' work. I look at the totality rather than just the surface.

JIM: *It shows. Were you actually influenced by any comic-book artists, British or American? I don't really see much influence. If it's there, you've hidden it well.* (Laughter.)

DAVE: Well, people say they've noticed a likeness to **Wally Wood** in my work, mainly, I suppose, because of the cleanness of it. I loved the Ballantine reprints of the MAD stuff, and I've got things at home that I copied from **Wally Wood**. I loved **Carmine Infantino**'s ADAM STRANGE, and I loved a lot of the early **Ditko** — those were the artists I saw a lot of in my formative years. And I liked **Kubert**'s HAWKMAN. Hawkman was my favorite super-hero for a long time. Of British artists, I liked **Frank Bellamy**, who had a very dramatic black-and-white style — an artist who could draw dramatically, but very realistically, and obviously used a lot of references. And I liked lots of British artists whose names I never even knew.

JIM: *What artists do you enjoy now?*

DAVE: Garcia Lopez is an outstanding draftsman. I'd buy anything he drew. **Brian Bolland** is pretty good, too.

JIM: *The thing about Brian Bolland — and I see it in your work, too — is that even in a simple thing like a hand gesture, a little bit more thought goes into it. I'm not just picking on the new artists. Even some of the older artists begin to fall into using a lot of stock shots, maybe out of necessity to produce a lot of material, and a sense of sameness begins to creep into a lot of their work. It's amazing how subtle differences — such as in your work, or Brian's — can help avoid those stock shots.*

DAVE: The way I avoid those shots is that I compose each page as a whole, and I alter a gesture or a pose of a character to fit the compostion. And I try to do a different composition on each page and make each page different. If I've got two people talking to each other — two faces in profile — I wouldn't like to do it again in that book. But if you are aware that everything you draw is only a function of the story and storytelling, it's very hard to fall into repetetive traps.

JIM: *When I was editing, the most frustrating kind of artist to work with was the kind who really wasn't interested in the story. They became interested in comics mainly because of the artwork and were really only interested in drawing super-hero figures in action. I would give them a plot that had lots of characterization, and they would say, "This is the dull stuff." Unless it was twenty pages of characters hitting each other, it was very difficult to get them excited. In super-hero comics, where many of the plots can be similar, a lot of the burden of trying to make a story different falls into the artist's hands— how the story is visually presented.*

DAVE: It comes back to what I said before. It's not really that difficult to make a muscular super-hero in action look interesting. That doesn't strike me as any great trick. The great trick is to make two people in a room talking look interesting. If you look at a **Garcia Lopez** page, even when there's nothing violent going on, there's always dynamism, strong compositions, and carefully placed characters. That impresses me far more than another fist coming out of the page.

JIM: *What was it like working on GREEN LANTERN?*

DAVE: GREEN LANTERN was fun to do, because it was one of the comics I collected as a kid.

ZHAT IS AS FAR AS YOU GO, MEIN HERREN.
YOU VILL STOP YOUR TRUCK AND SURRENDER ZER CONTENTS IMMEDIATELY --OR YOU VILL SUFFER ZER CONSEQUENCES!

The Javelin, a villain created by Len Wein and Dave Gibbons for GREEN LANTERN #173.

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"If there's a British invasion of American

Dave Gibbons art from the "Dan Dare" strip in 2000 A.D. "People have said they've noticed a likeness to Wally Wood in my work," says Dave.

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JIM: *Then why did you decide to leave the book?*

DAVE: I said I would do GREEN LANTERN for about a year, and then see how I felt. That year has passed. Leaving the book is no slight at all to what Len's writing. I still think GREEN LANTERN is a good, middle-of-the-road DC comic. But I still think I would have enjoyed it more on the year when he was in his exile in space, because that would have contained more of the elements that I like so much about DOCTOR WHO, instead of the down-to-earth soap-opera approach, which I understand is extremely popular.

JIM: *Are there any particular writers you'd enjoy working with in the future?*

DAVE: Well, I would like to do some more work with **Alan Moore** — the Blessed **Alan Moore**, I should say *(laughter)* — because I like him very much personally, and because we seem to have struck up a rapport working on projects together in the past. **John Wagner** is currently making in-roads into the American market, and he's another writer I'd enjoy working with as, indeed, I would with **Pat Mills**.

JIM: *What about US writers?*

DAVE: I tend to look at American artists rather than writers. **Len Wein** I was aware of as a writer whose work I enjoyed in the past; I enjoy **Doug Moench**'s work on AZTEC ACE a lot; and there the list just about runs out, not due to disregard of anyone else's talent. But really just my not being aware of it.

JIM: *Generally speaking, what projects do you think you'd enjoy working on, having left GREEN LANTERN?*

DAVE: Well, I'd like to work on some other classic heroic characters. I'd love to do some SUPERMAN, which will, I believe, come about. In fact, it looks like **Alan Moore** and myself will be doing next year's SUPERMAN ANNUAL. I would like to do other super-hero stuff if it could be done in a slightly different way, maybe leaving out some of the standard super-hero preconceptions. I know this is everyone's dream. I like science fiction and would like to do some more science-fiction work, and I would ultimately like to at least pencil, ink, letter and color my own work completely, because I feel this is the only way it can work. I would even have the audacity to suggest I might even be able to write my own stuff.

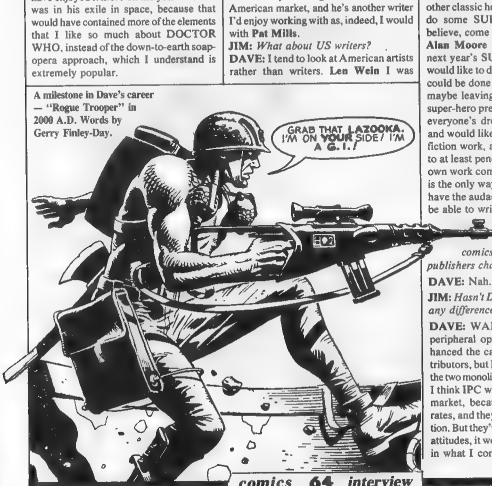
JIM: *What do you think of the future for British comics? Have the British comics publishers changed any of their policies?*

DAVE: Nah. *(Laughter.)*

JIM: *Hasn't Dez Skinn's magazine made any difference?*

DAVE: WARRIOR, good as it is, is a peripheral operation. I feel that it's enhanced the careers of several of its contributors, but I don't feel it's really moved the two monoliths of IPC and DC Thomson. I think IPC will continue to dominate the market, because they can pay the best rates, and they've got the biggest distribution. But they've got very firmly entrenched attitudes, it would seem. They treat artists in what I consider to be a very offhand

A milestone in Dave's career — "Rogue Trooper" in 2000 A.D. Words by Gerry Finley-Day.



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comics, it's not from any desire to invade."

way. Just as a sidelight, I attended a meeting of illustrators at which IPC's legal representative lectured, and told us that the reason IPC doesn't return artwork is that what the artists would do is change the artwork and re-submit it a few weeks later. *(Laughter.)* I think that shows the degree of ignorance and disrespect which so many people, at least on the business side of it, have for comics. I don't think IPC knew what it spawned when it started 2000 AD. I don't think it really understands comics as you or I know them, and comics come very low down on IPC's list of priorities. They keep trying to come up with another 2000 AD, but unfortunately they're so hidebound by their own caution, all they end up doing is the kind of comics that were around before 2000 AD had ever been dreamt of. They had a concept which was going to be called HEROES, a great title for a comic, with the proposition that each strip would feature a hero — a barbarian hero, a war hero, a sports hero. But the management thought, "You can't do a comic called HEROES — it's got to be like all the other comics. It's got to be named after a fast car or a jet plane or something racy." So they called it TORNADO. *(Laughter.)* Which means nothing! Who cares about a comic called TORNADO? If their attitude is going to change at all, it's going to change very slowly. DC Thomson's most popular comic, BEANO, has been running for fifty years and it's indistinguishable from what it was fifty years ago. They don't try to keep up with trends, they just produce good, solid sellers, and good luck to them — they make no pretense at doing otherwise. As far as American comics are concerned, I think the past couple of years, things have been in a real state of flux, and in the next couple of years it's going to be real difficult to tell how things are going to turn out. There's so much new product coming out and so many new formats, it's hard to say what direction the industry will be taking.

JIM: *Do you think there's a British invasion?*

DAVE: If there's a British invasion, it's not from any desire to invade. It's really a pressure from Britain to expel anybody who wants to do comics in a conscientious way.

JIM: *Is it more lucrative to get involved with an American comic-book publisher? Are the rates competitive, and the overall conditions more attractive?*

DAVE: Oh, yes. The conditions are much more attractive. I think the thing about American companies — and on this visit, I've seen it first hand — is that you tend to get people who work in them because they love comics and want to do a good job in comics, even if they make mistakes or are misguided. In Britain, comics are kind of a shameful operation. A lot of people are working in comics until the day when they can write their novel or edit POPULAR GARDENING or do something they can be proud of. I like the sense of excitement about American comics. There are people who are in positions of power who can decide to do a new title, take a new approach, go out on a limb — which isn't the case in Britain. Hopefully — because Britain stands virtually alone in its downgrading of comics people — IPC will wake up and see that they are alone in this treatment, and bring things up to a competitive stand.

The old order changeth. This art by Dave Gibbons for the third DC SAMPLER heralds the debut of the new Green Lantern.

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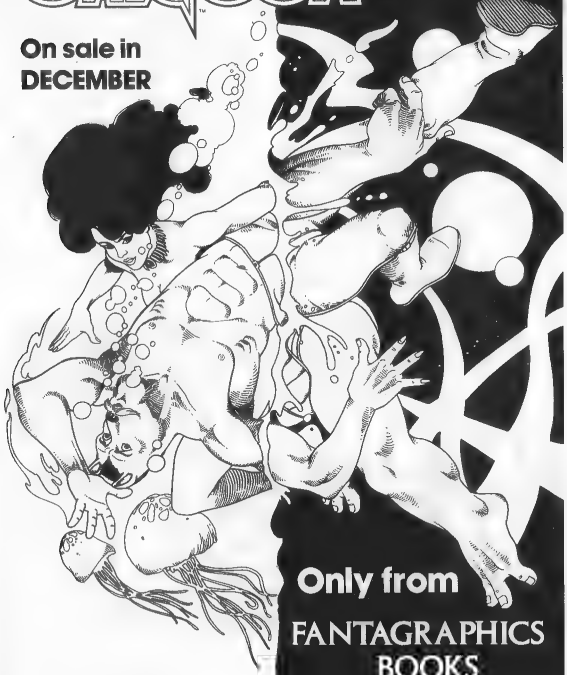

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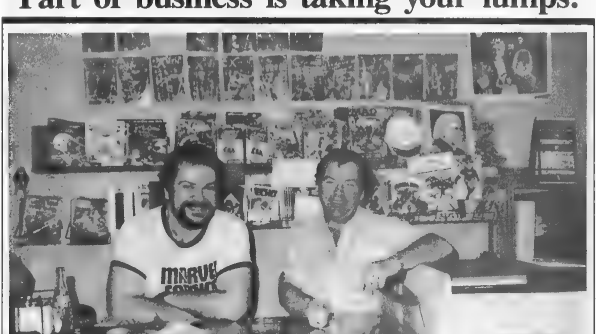

Brian Morris and Doug Sanford, ready for business.

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The Book Nook in Champaign, Illinois, is one of the hundreds of comics specialty shops located throughout the country. Established in 1961, as a used-book store, The Book Nook became a comics shop in the early Seventies when it began selling collectors' items comics. The success of that venture led owner-operator Douglas Sanford to believe that a large, virtually untapped comic reading faction existed in the Champaign-Urbana (University of Illinois) area. It wasn't long before he was dealing in new comics and specialty items. In effect, he cornered a market that no one else in the area had the vision to see.

The Book Nook currently carries new, used and collector comics, new and used magazines (comic, fan, role-playing and science-fiction/fantasy), collector paraphernalia (boxes, bags, inventory cards, etc.), merchandising items (posters, buttons, T-shirts, etc.), DOCTOR WHO books, magazines and merchandise, used paperback books, and collector PLAYBOYS. In recent years, to counter an ever-growing complexity in the world of comics, Doug has instituted a no-charge subscription lay-away service, a charge-per-cost mailing service, and a free-to-all weekly comics newsletter designed to keep its readers apprised of all major changes in comics. The latter is researched and written by Doug's resident comics expert, Brian Morris.

Darrel Boatz visited The Book Nook re-

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Brian K. Morris
Born: 2 March 1956 — Danville, Illinois
Occupation: Comics Saleshuman at The Book Nook
Favorite Comic: Marvelman in WARRIOR
Favorite Book: THE STAND by Stephen King
Favorite Movie: SUPERMAN: THE MOVIE
Favorite Song: "We Are The Champions," by Queen

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Douglas Sanford
Born: 20 April 1939 — Urbana, Illinois
Occupation: Owner, The Book Nook of Champaign, Illinois
Favorite Comic: The one that sells the most.
Favorite Book: THE GODFATHER by Mario Puzo
Favorite TV Show: HILL STREET BLUES
Favorite Song: "Midnight Special" by Credence Clearwater Revival

"Anybody who comes up with a precise formula

DOCTOR WHO material — comics, buttons, posters, etc. — is very big at The Book Nook. Above: a panel from Marvel's DOCTOR WHO comic, words by Pat Mills and John Wagner, art by Dave Gibbons.

cently to see what Doug and Brian had to say about the current state of comics ...

DARREL BOATZ: *Seeing as how this interview will garner this store a lot of publicity, my first question: What about my kickback?*

BRIAN MORRIS: Oh-ho! I knew there was a catch! *(Laughter.)*

DOUG SANFORD *(mock-petulant):* But the interview hasn't run yet!

DARREL: *How about describing a typical day at work?*

BRIAN: Hectic.

DOUG: There really is no typical workday when you run a small store like this. There always seems to be something new going on. Probably, though, the one thing that seems to be typical, or consistent, with regard to the comic business, is trying to find out where our shipment of new comics is. Why is it late? When will it be here? Why didn't they ship the right amount? When will we be able to get a replacement shipment?

DARREL: *What exactly is it that a comics retail store owner does?*

DOUG: Keeping stocked the things that people want to buy.

DARREL: *Such as?*

DOUG: That's a good question.

BRIAN: I wish I knew.

DOUG: You try to anticipate what's going to sell, be more popular, and it's a hard thing to do. You overbuy on some and underbuy on others, and you either have to hustle to get more or get rid of them.

BRIAN: Anybody who ever comes up with a precise formula for ordering comics will make a fortune.

DOUG: Especially on brand new issues — first issues, second issues, things like that. Comics companies — Marvel, DC, etc. — ought to have a return policy for the first three or four issues of a new title. Our orders are placed for issues two and three before we ever get number one in. If number one is a dud, you know that two and three are going to be just as bad — but you've already ordered several cases of the next two issues, and there is nothing that you can do about it.

(Brian leaves to take care of customers.)

DARREL: *I imagine that the publishing companies give you a lot of headaches, unintentionally, with more than just return policies — title changes, scheduling mix-ups, price jumps, and so on.*

DOUG: Yeah, they seem to forget about the people on this end of things. You have to put up with these things and work around them as best you can.

DARREL: *What are some other problems you face? Could you get into the process at your end of the market?*

DOUG: We receive our comics kind of haphazardly. What, between shipping snafus and computer foul-ups and just plain incompetence on the part of some of the distributors, it seems like we're always running around trying to get our orders together. They short us. UPS doesn't bring everything at once, and they invariably bring the parts of your orders that don't have the packing slips, so you don't know what you're being billed for or what all you were supposed to get. You don't know when to tell your customers when something they want will be in. Our customers that live out of town can't come in two or three times a week just because the comics they want didn't arrive on time.

(Brian returns.)

DARREL: *Looking around, I see you carry a wide selection of merchandise here. What percentage of your business is strictly in new comics?*

DOUG: They're better than half our business.

Need we tell you? MARVEL SUPER-HEROES SECRET WARS is a bestseller at The Book Nook.

HE'S GETTING AWAY!
WE'RE LUCKY THAT'S ALL HE WAS TRYING TO DO! HE REALLY CLOBBERED US!
AND LET YOU ZAP ME WITH YOUR CONCUSSION BEAMS, CYCLOPS? SU-U RE!
SPIDER-MAN, WAIT! IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK! I SAID STOP, MISTER!

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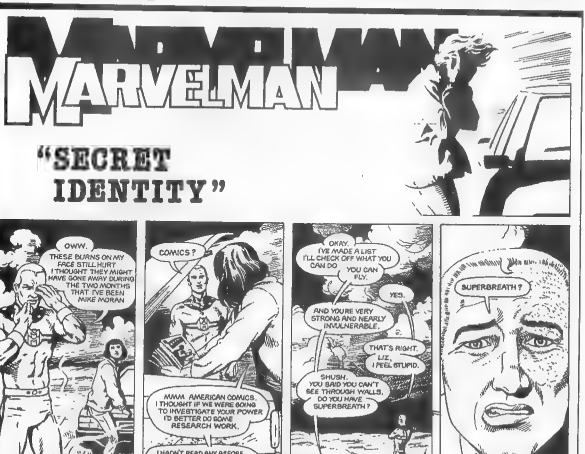
for ordering comics will make a fortune."


MARVELMAN
"SECRET IDENTITY"
OWW. THESE BURNS ON MY FACE STILL HURT. I THOUGHT THEY MIGHT HAVE GONE AWAY DURING THE TWO MONTHS THAT I'VE BEEN IN MIKE MORAN
THEY'RE HEALING INCREDIBLY FAST. YOU KNOW THEY ARE, JUST WAIT THERE A MOMENT WHILE I GET THE COMICS..
COMICS ?
MMM. AMERICAN COMICS. I THOUGHT IF WE WERE GOING TO INVESTIGATE YOUR POWER I'D BETTER DO SOME RESEARCH WORK.
I HADN'T READ ANY BEFORE WHEN I WAS A KID. I HAD A GIRL'S COMIC ..."SALLY" OR SOMETHING SOME OF THIS STUFF'S BETTER THAN YOU'D EXPECT, BUT MOST OF IT'S CRAP.
OKAY. I'VE MADE A LIST. I'LL CHECK OFF WHAT YOU CAN DO
YOU CAN FLY.
YES.
AND YOU'RE VERY STRONG AND NEARLY INVULNERABLE.
THAT'S RIGHT. LIZ. I FEEL STUPID.
SHUSH. YOU SAID YOU CAN'T SEE THROUGH WALLS. DO YOU HAVE SUPERBREATH ?
SUPERBREATH ?

© 1983 Quality Communications

A personal favorite of the Book Nook's resident comics collector and expert, Brian Morris, the British WARRIOR. Here's an excerpt from the "Marvelman" strip. Words by Alan Moore, art by Alan Davis and Garry Leach.

BRIAN: They carry their weight.

DARREL: *What do you feel is your function, your place ... um, I need a word .*

BRIAN: Formulate your thoughts. Take your time.

DARREL: *Thank you.*

DOUG: Our "responsibility"?

DARREL: *Right! What do you feel are your responsibilities to your customers?*

DOUG: To get them the material they want when they want it, whatever it is. We try to anticipate what our customers will want, so that we can get it as soon as possible in the quantities they require. We also try to have on stock the older comics when they want them.

BRIAN: Also, to answer their questions, to let them know if there is something else, maybe, that they would be interested in. To help them in their hobby. Some people get into comics with no real idea of how to go about collecting, so if they want to expand their involvement with the hobby, we are here to help them in whatever ways we can.

DOUG: I'd like to amplify on that. If you're going to have a comic business, it is imperative that you have a knowledgeable person to work with your customers, to answer their questions, to recommend things to them. I, myself, am not really a comic reader or collector. I'm a businessman and my business is selling comics. I do try to keep up with what goes on, but Brian is a comic reader and collector, and that makes him an asset to me because he does those things for me. He's an extension of me, in that he takes care of the parts of the business that I cannot. He handles the creative end, the ...

DARREL: *Public relations?*

DOUG: Right. Brian is an avid comic fan and collector. He can talk to our customers about things they're interested in. They couldn't care less about my problems with shipping and billing. They want to know about this artist and that character — things of that nature.

BRIAN: He's right.

DOUG: The boss is always right, especially when he's present.

(Doug leaves to take care of customers.)

DARREL: *As a comics fan, the job you have is something of a dream come true, probably second only to being a comic writer or a comic artist. I'm sure that you love your job — I know that I would love your job — but does having your occupation and your hobby being practically one and the same give you any problems?*

BRIAN: I don't have any problems in that regard. Any problems tht I have involve business

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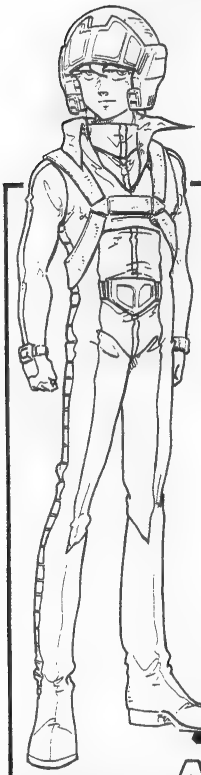

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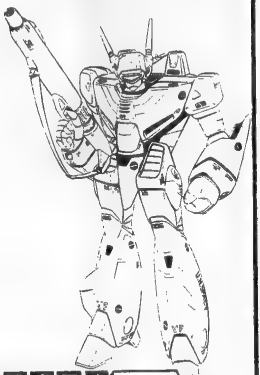

超時空要塞

マクロス

MACROSS

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"If people want to write pornography, let them write for porno mags, not comics."

iness rather than the hobby, and they're more or less an extension of Doug's problems — the comics don't come in, so what do I tell the customers? That sort of thing.

DARREL: *Part of your job is keeping up to date on what's happening in comics, isn't it?*

BRIAN: It helps that I collect quite a bit myself. I do our weekly newsletter here, and that's just an extension of the work that I have to do keeping up with developments in the field. In finding out what I would like to read, as well as finding out stuff for our newsletter, I'm even able to help Doug when it comes to making up orders.

DARREL: *What do you like to read?*

BRIAN: I am not the type of person who goes for any one type of comic, like some people go for anything with the X-Men in it.

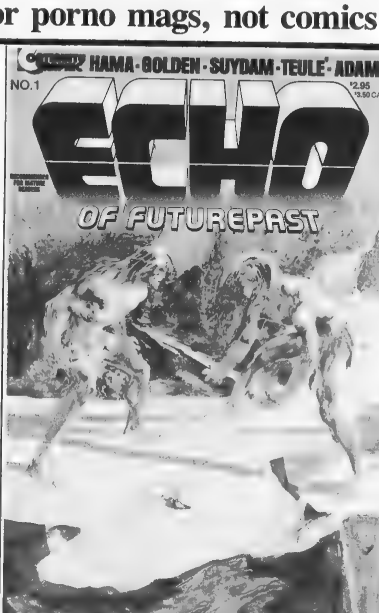
DARREL: *There are plenty of people who collect* only *X-MEN.*

BRIAN: That's fine — whatever's right for them. But for myself, I prefer a variety of things. I like X-MEN. I like SUPERMAN. I also like ZOT. I like POWER PACK, CEREBUS, and WARRIOR.

DARREL: *WARRIOR is an interesting comic. It's somewhat different from everything else on the market today.*

BRIAN: It hearkens back, I think, to the original days of the comics when magazines featuring only one character or one group were the exceptions rather than the rule. WARRIOR is like the early ACTION, ADVENTURE, and DETECTIVE, which were anthology magazines, so that if you didn't like one thing then you'd probably find something else that you would like. With WARRIOR, if you don't like, say, "Marvelman" then maybe you'll like "Pressbutton" or "V For Vendetta." I'm a "Marveiman" freak myself. And I love what **Alan Moore** is doing in SAGA OF THE SWAMP THING. And that's where part of my job comes in, in being able to recommend things to people. I've recommended SWAMP THING to people I know like WARRIOR, because if they like **Alan Moore's** work in WARRIOR, then they'll probably like his work in SWAMP THING. And the reverse is also true — I've recommended WARRIOR to people who like SWAMP THING.

DARREL: *You have to keep tabs on everything, even those things that you may not particularly like — and might even hate — to be able to comment on them and to steer people toward materials similar to their interests. That sounds like a tall order.*



Neal Adams' ECHO OF FUTUREPAST — is it "pornography"?

© 1984 Continuity Comics and Neal Adams

BRIAN: It is, at times. Mainly, you have to know your customers, know what they like. Part of my job is also being able to tell them what they may not like.

DARREL: *In other words, you have to be on a one-to-one basis with your customers.?*

BRIAN: It helps. I know most of their names, and I now their personalities to a degree. If they ask me for a recommendation, I can usually give them one.

DARREL: *As you said before, some of your problems are similar to Doug's, just in a different context. You have to deal with them more on the consumer level than on the business level. That seems to present a dichotomy, doesn't it?*

BRIAN: It does, and every so often it presents a problem. Fortunately, most of our customers keep pretty well informed, so that things like title changes are anticipated and

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"Publishers forget about the people at this end."

Script © 1984 Archie Goodwin Art © 1984 Al Williamson

BUT THEY COULDN'T MAKE IT LOOK LIKE THIS. THE MORE I STUDY THE PLACE, JAREL, THE MORE I THINK I COULD SPEND DAYS HERE... WEEKS...
WE'VE ALREADY BEEN HERE TOO LONG. NO MORE WHIMS, KIRTH. BACK TO THE SHIP...

Brian thinks the higher-quality paper "allows for a better product, and allows artists like Al Williamson — who do really fine, detailed work — a broader canvas." Panel from "Relic," in EPIC ILLUSTRATED #27. Words by Archie Goodwin, art by Al Williamson.

easily dealt with. Every couple of months or so something will catch people by surprise, and I'll have to find out about it and make a lot of explanations to people. It doesn't come up that often. I'm lucky.

DARREL: *I noticed when I came into the store that you were lucky enough — or smart enough — here to get heavily involved in the DOCTOR WHO market. You have an extensive selection of DOCTOR WHO books and posters, keyrings, T-shirts, coin banks, and much more.*

BRIAN: The comic companies themselves are very much into merchandising. DC authorizes toys based on their characters. First Comics authorizes keychains and stickers. It's just another aspect of money making for the companies. It's a very important part of their financial structure. I think that comics shops should try to carry more of these things.

DOUG *(returning)*: Sure, why let K-Mart have all that business? As a matter of fact, I'd like to see them put out *more* stuff — more specialty items. Anything: Miniature replicas of some of the super-heroes, their weapons and things they are identified with.

DARREL: *Sort of a physical edition of the MARVEL UNIVERSE?*

DOUG: Sure, why not? Just like the old radio premiums of my youth — we were forever sending off for them. Two box-tops and a quarter would get you a LONE RANGER silver bullet ring. Look at the value of some of those things now. Some of them are very prized. People are very interested in unique little items like that.

DARREL: *There's a whole collectors' market for those old premiums — there's no reason why there shouldn't be one for the more recent merchandising items.*

BRIAN: There will be, give it a few years.

DARREL: *But, in the comics collectors' market, you have a whole different set of rules: pricing, grading, acquiring …*

BRIAN: It's part of the job. Like Superchicken, you say you knew the job was dangerous when you took it.

DARREL: *The question I was leading up to — and thank you for jumping in …*

BRIAN: You're welcome.

DARREL: *… Is that you have to keep an eye on the collectors' market, with its constantly fluctuating prices and values, where everybody seems to have their own ideas about such things as grading criteria …*

DOUG: True.

DARREL: *… and so much depends sometimes on artists, character appearances, on births and deaths and origins and on and on, that … let me rephrase this …*

BRIAN: No, no. I don't think I can take it anymore!

DOUG: I think I know what you're getting at, Darrel. You have to keep on top of that market at all times. It's oftentimes a very fast-moving market. Some of the new titles that come out become collectors' items very fast, and the values on them shoot way up. When SECRET WARS #4 was a current comic, SECRET WARS #1 was a collectors' item. We were selling copies of #1 for $4.00 apiece, and we could have gotten more than that.

From my point of view, we're in business to make as much money as we can. You don't want to give things away for a song, yet on the other hand, you don't want to overcharge for things, because it you overcharge you get a bad reputation with the collectors, who'll say you're too high and that you're charging Mint Plus for things that might only be Fine or Very Fine.

Anything, it seems, can make something a collectors' item: a costume change, the death of a character. Our job is to try to anticipate those things and meet the demand.

DARREL: *But sometimes a title market can collapse faster even than it rose. How do you cover yourselves?*

DOUG: Sometimes you don't. Sometimes you take a beating.

BRIAN: The best way to avoid that is to move the stuff as fast as you can.

DOUG: Right. You can't necessarily put things away and wait for them to develop a strong following. We do sometimes speculate on things, but a lot of the times, if we try to get a jump on the market, we'll end up with egg on our face. That's part of being in business, you know, taking your lumps. Usually, the best policy is, if you've got it, move it, sell it, don't wait for tomorrow because you can't count on tomorrow. Get in and get your money out of it now, make the profit now no matter how small it is per item.

DARREL: *Let's see …*

BRIAN *(to Doug)*: When he gets stuck he's going to ask you how long you've been inking for Marvel. *(Laughter.)*

DARREL: *Well, I did look through some recent issues of COMICS INTERVIEW for some sample questions I might ask. How about this from the Steve Leialoha interview: "Say something in Hawaiian."*

BRIAN: Jack Lord.

DOUG: Book 'em, Danno.

DARREL: *Getting back to comics: What's hot?*

DOUG: SECRET WARS.

BRIAN: All of the SPIDER-MAN titles. SAGA OF THE SWAMP THING is becoming popular.

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"You have to know what your customers like."

DARREL: *A lot of people still view comics as being primarily juvenile entertainment. Some people have recently begun debating the advisability of instituting a comics rating system, on the assumption that the public perception of comics is that they're primarily for children. How do you, personally or professionally, feel about such a move?*

BRIAN: I am not for a ratings system *per se*, but I think tht comics that are for a more mature crowd should be labeled as such, such as Pacific Comics did with their "recommended for mature readers" sticker. And I feel that part of my job is to know which comics are questionable. If we feel something is questionable, we place it out of the reach of our younger customers. Although, the prices frequently do that for us, anyway.

DOUG: Maturity is fine, but some people have been using the name of maturity to delve toward pornography. If people want to write pornography and use questionable language, let them write for porno magazines and books — that's what they're for. There's no place in comics for that.

I think it's ridiculous when we have to start censoring the comics we get in. That's another burden on the retailer. They are making censors out of us, and I don't feel that I need to be a censor for anybody. And yet, I don't want to offend parents by having things like **Neal Adams**' ECHO OF FUTUREPAST readily available to their kids. I wouldn't degrade myself by selling HUSTLER or PENTHOUSE to a kid, and I shouldn't have to apply those same standards to comics. And that's my feelings on that.

(Doug leaves to take care of customers.)

BRIAN: Makes a helluva exit.

DARREL: *Over the past half-dozen years, a disputed "renaissance" has been going on in comics. Do you feel that it is a true renaissance, or just hype, as some people claim it is?*

BRIAN: I think that this is probably the most exciting time to be reading comics since the mid-Sixties. Right now, the market is slowly cutting back on the number of title that are being published, but I think that right now there are more quality titles that are worthy of attention, such as CAMELOT 3000, and the various graphic novels. We're seeing a renaissance in comics in the amount of choice you have, although most of it seems to be in the various adventure *genres*. We're also getting better production. There's more care given to the product.

DARREL: *The quality of the paper being used now is better but, personally, I never really saw anything wrong with the old abrakadabra "toilet paper" everything used to be printed on.*

BRIAN: That's "Abatiba," not "abrakadabra." There is nothing wrong with it *per se*, but the only reason it was used in comics is that it's cheap. A higher quality paper allows for a better product. They hold up better, and they allow artists like **Al Williamson** — who do really fine, detailed work — a broader canvas. The art reproduces better, making for a better product visually, and I think that the higher quality of the package also allows for better writing.

(Doug returns.)

DARREL: *What do you see for the future?*

DOUG: There is a lot of expansion yet to come. Instead of comics being a kind of lunatic-fringe hobby, I see comics getting more into the mainstream of literature, becoming a little more accepted overall. Instead of being a maverick form of entertainment geared to a special audience, they're going to broaden out and appeal to a larger, wider audience.

BRIAN: I see new talent entering the field — creators who will hopefully not follow as much in their predecessors' footsteps, but who will stake out new areas, and boldly go where no comic has gone before.

"Right now," says Brian, "there are more quality titles worthy of attention, such as CAMELOT 3000.

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Morningstar has temperatures rising each month in the

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COMICO THE COMIC COMPANY

LAST WORD

Comics Interview 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 New York, NY 10001

SHE-HULK A NON-ISSUE

Dear Dave and crew,

In #13 you ask us to tell you our likes and dislikes and suggestions for this mag. Well, that's a little bit difficult for me since I've been generally pleased with your format and execution so far, but since you asked ...

For me, the key words for your publication should be diversity and balance (which, come to think of it, are pretty close, conceptually). I mean this both in respect to the interviews selected and to how each interview is conducted.

As far as selecting the interview goes, you should continue to be diverse in trying to cover the full range of the comics field, but be balanced in not concentrating on certain types of people or companies. I will, of course, continue to expect to see all types of people interviewed and not just the usual writers and artists we see everywhere. I also think a good rule of thumb would be to have one person from DC each issue, one from Marvel, one from the independents, and one from the business/fan segment. This, naturally, need not be rigorously adhered to (and feel free to have more than four interviews per issue!), but I think it is a good guide that will maintain your diversity and also reflect the interests of your readership.

Although I think you are right to concentrate on "mainstream" American comics, I think some "off the beaten path" interviews would be interesting. How about a series of interviews on comics in other countries, perhaps focusing on their impact on American comics (or American impact on them)? Also, what about the whole world of self-published comics and mini-comics? I have recently become aware of the work of **Larry** BEANWORLD **Marder** and **Matt** CYNICALMAN **Feazell**, and I'm sure that there are many others out there. This is the world of truly personal comics, of people who are doing it out of the love of the medium and/or to experiment. They may or may not be the stars of tomorrow, but they are a part of comics in America.

I don't want to drag out this She-Hulk thing too much, but I would like to address one point raised by **Barry Dutter** in this issue. He seems to hate the She-Hulk basically because she is a "rip-off" of the Hulk. Firstly, I would say that she is enough different from the Hulk to be considered a truly separate character, but there is more to it than that. The origins of a character are not the ultimate measure of that character's worth. **William Shakespeare** took virtually all of his ideas from other playwrights (a common practice in that day). Would **Dutter** ban HAMLET because some other playwright had the basic idea first? **Shakespeare**'s work has survived (and that of his rivals hasn't) because his was the best treatment of the concepts involved. So, to me, She-Hulk's derivation is a non-issue. It is her worth as a character that matters, and in that regard she may be far from the best around, but she is also far from the worst.

T. M. Maple
Box 1272 - Station B
Weston, Ontario
Canada M9L 2R9

Years ago, Roger Slifer brought CYNICALMAN to my attention, and we both got more than a few laughs out of Matt Feazell's misfit. More recently, Larry Marder sent me copies of BEANWORLD, which I also find quite amusing. And, since our avowed aim is to ultimately interview everyone associated with comics, it's not at all unlikely that — sooner or later — interviews with folks like Marder and Feazell will find their way into our pages.

—DAK

The Sensuous She-Hulk, depicted by Kevin Nowlan for MARVEL FANFARE #16.

© 1994 MCG

MORATORIUM ON SHE-HULK?

Mr. Kraft:

What a day this could have been for me. Laughing out loud at the latest issue of CEREBUS. Immensely enjoying the X-MEN ANNUAL. Only marginally liking the second issue of KITTY PRYDE AND WOLVERINE (two out of three ...?)

Here's what *really* spoiled it for me. No sooner do I put down the latest FANTASTIC FOUR, which included a nasty anti-SHE-HULK letter by **Barry Dutter**, than I pick up the latest COMICS INTERVIEW, which included a nastier anti-She-Hulk letter by **Barry Dutter**.

Mr. Kraft, this is; I believe, the third or fourth time in the pages of COMICS INTERVIEW that you have given **Mr. Dutter** free space to rant and rave about the She-Hulk. What really upset me is he also decided to get a few digs in at one **Amy Sacks**, who lives about one mile from my house, yet I don't know her. I have been able to handle him knocking the She-Hulk. But now that he has decided to aim his sights at real people, I am now terminally pissed off! (I'm fairly certain you can fend off **Mr. Dutter** yourself, Amy, and I would like to see you do so. Just consider this letter a little left-field help from a fellow alumnus of Ocean Township High School.)

Miss Sacks, in her letter in CI #9, stated that she had little patience for "people who have nothing better to do than to maligh fictional characters." **Mr. Dutter**, in the current issue (#13), decides to not only demean the She-Hulk in the future, but also those who defend her, in his own sneaky turnabout way, same as when he gave up his campaign to cancel the SHE-HULK book — and turned right around and attempted to get her kicked out of the Avengers (OF WHICH SHE IS STILL A MEMBER).

I just might be setting myself up as his next target, but as much as I enjoy seing the She-Hulk in FF, I did NOT enjoy her solo comic a few years back. The art was poor, but the writing was okay, if a bit trite at times. (Sorry, Dave.) Despite the work **John Byrne** has done with her, I can't defend her myself any longer just on the basis of the SHE-HULK book. (BARRY, DO NOT INTERPRET THIS SENTENCE AS MEANING THAT I DO NOT LIKE THE SHE-HULK! AND DON'T QUOTE THAT LAST PHRASE OUT OF CONTEXT EVER!!!)

What **Mr. Dutter** fails to realize about the whole thing is that there IS a difference between the Hulk and the She-Hulk. Bruce Banner dreads becoming the Hulk (although the situation there may have changed — I don't read the book regularly), but Jennifer Walters PREFERS being She-Hulk. Can't you see that very clear, obvious difference between the two characters, Barry? Or do you see only that which you want to see? (Now you know why I'm afraid of being quoted out of context above.)

Dutter also mentions "a little controversy is good for sales — just ask the COMICS JOURNAL!" As much as they have the Constitutionally guaranteed right to say whatever they like in their pages, it often becomes a temple of unnecessary nastiness and rudeness.

Dave, don't ruin COMICS INTERVIEW with this gentleman's singular tirades. I suggest a moratorium on She-Hulk letters, until everyone's temper has cooled down. Mine included. Your space should go toward constructive comments and not toward these pointless "crusades" of **Barry Dutter**. The mere fact that he takes credit toward getting her book cancelled and ostensibly kicking her out of the Avengers (letter in FF #273) points out something that **Mr. Dutter** is going to have to learn if he does decide to enter the comics industry. Millions of people read these damned comics. One letter is not going to change the mind of an editor, a writer, or an artist, unless the viewpoints therein are stated clearly and succinctly, and above all, CONSTRUCTIVELY. I've gone back through old comics and seen letters written by many who have become pros, and these letters always contained intelligent, well-thought-out opinions. It's easy to see how some of these people have come to excel in the comics in-

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dustry. On the other hand, every time I see **Dutter's** byline in COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE, I have to laugh out loud. It is not going to be easy for him to carve out a niche for himself in the funnybook business with the reputation he has established for himself.

This may seem to be the last word on the whole subject, but I think I'll defer to **Mr. Kraft** to try to put an end to all of this childish behavior (which I may be contributing to, as well, but I'll restrict my letters in the future to the actual comics themselves and not the opinions expressed on the letters page).

David Mackey
180 Whalepond Road
Oakhurst, NJ 07755

DUTTER'S GOT CALL

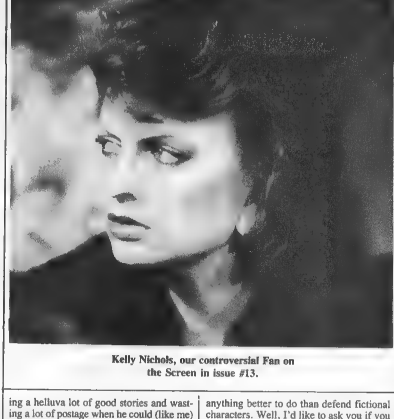
Dear DAK,

Rapture!! Here I am, a reader of comics for barely three-and-a-half years, and already I get the, um, honor of being called an ignorant slut by none other than **Mr. Barry Dutter**, himself. Wow. I wonder if **Mark Hamill** was this proud when **Harlan Ellison** called him a "functional illiterate" in a long-ago issue of STARLOG. (And ya' misspelled my surname, **Dutter**, ya' ★$@#% ☆!!)

Of course, I must admit that I deserved **Mr. Dutter's** insults. Imagine me being stupid enough to assume that he, like any other rational reader might, hated a character because of her PERSONALITY! Perish the thought, **Mr. Dutter** just doesn't like her COPYRIGHT. I hereby publicly apologize to Barry and all the rest of the She-Hulk haters for having the audacity to begin my comics reading in late 1981, thereby neatly missing She-Hulk's solo comic and the reason behind her creation. I first saw her in AVENGERS #222, and (silly, silly me) did not think, "Gee, what an awful, repulsive, tacky, tasteless attempt to keep Universal Studios from TV copyright infringment!" No, in infinite naivete I thought, "Hey, this character's okay even for a spin-off. Maybe **Shooter, Zelenetz, LaRoche,** and **Breeding** know their business and I should read this comic." Please, Barry, forgive me, for I was young, foolish, and only read three other comics (all Marvel, all super-hero) at that time.

Obviously, I'm still young and foolish, but at least now I read about two dozen comics of varying companies and *genres*, and one thing I've learned is this: Just about anyone can create from scratch a moderately interesting- and appealing hero/heroine. It must, therefore, be more difficult to work with someone else's creation, and even tougher, still, when that creation exists for the idiotic reasons **Mr. Dutter** mentioned. If a **John Byrne** or **Roger Stern** can turn a "rip-off" like the She-Hulk into a likeable (or at least plausible) character, he deserves praise for it, not harrassment.

I feel sorry for Barry. By taking his copyrights so seriously (four letters on the subject and it ceases to be funny), he's missing a helluva lot of good stories and wasting a lot of postage when he could (like me) be devoting his time to worthier causes like the Committee Not To Re-Elect President Reagan, or — oops! Now I've done it... I'm gonna have the Republicans *AND* the She-Hulk Haters angry at me. (Well, as an old SNL fan like Barry should know, it's always somethin', right?)



Kelly Nichols, our controversial Fan on the Screen in issue #13.

I also, in closing, would like to say that Barry's got a lotta' damn gall telling me that *I've* got no sense of humor. Lissen, Dave, if you wanna' deal with a *really* non-humorous bunch, I suggest you conduct an interview with the interns who sort the mail at Marvel and have to read even more anti-She-Hulk tirades from Barry than we do. Although I seriously doubt that you'd be able to print what they think of him in a (semi-) "clean" publication like INTERVIEW. Oh, well...

Amy Sacks
(Currently somewhere in New York)

TIRED OF BARRY'S BITCHING

Dear DAK:

This is in response to the latest of a never ending batch of letters sent in by a **Mr. Barry Dutter.**

Hey, bud, what's your problem? All you ever seem to do is bitch about the She-Hulk, and I think just about everyone is getting tired of it.

In your last letter to COMICS INTERVIEW, you asked **Amy Sacks** if she had anything better to do than defend fictional characters. Well, I'd like to ask you if you have nothing better to do with your life than belong to stupid hate clubs.

I must admit that I do not think the She-Hulk is a very good replacement for the Thing, but I do think she is a good addition to the ranks of the Avengers (which she is still a member of). The lady is a very good character, even if she is a spinoff of the Hulk. I very much enjoyed her monthly comic (that you seem to think you got canceled) and have every issue.

I personally find it hard to believe you do this anti-She-Hulk stuff. You must be joking. You are joking, aren't you?

I'd like to know what's next on your agenda, College seminars on the Annihilate She-Hulk Movement? Or maybe death threats to **John Byrne** for not killing her. Oh! I have an idea for you. Why don't you send the threats to the She-Hulk, herself? It seems to me that you think she's real or something.

But I should apologize, Barry, I shouldn't be so hard on you. After all, how much should I expect from someone who lives in New Jersey? Just joking.' After all, not everyone can live in California.

So, Barry, I know that even if this letter is printed, you won't give up your crusade. And I'll find it interesting to find out what your answers to some of my accusations are. But I hope you realize that this was all in good humor, just like I'm sure your committees are.

Thanks for letting me give my point of

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view to this situation, DAK. And, by the way, I loved issue #13.

Randy L. Watts
12962 Goleta St.
Pacoima, CA

THE GREAT SHE-HULK CONTROVERSY

Dear DAK:

I thoroughly enjoy your publication, both in its intent (to cover *all* aspects of the comics field) and its execution (attractive package with timely interviews; and the thing comes out *on time*, generally). I am particularly happy to see pieces on letterers and colorists, long ignored by-and-large in the fan press. Issue #13 had interviews with neither, unless one counts **Ernie Colon**, but that is hardly the norm.

Suggest: (1) Avoid doing the oversized issues. There really is a comic-book glut out here; people have finite resources, and hard choices about what not to buy. You are competing in a market where Marvel/Epic had seven #1 issues last month, not to mention two graphic novels; issue #1 (DALGODA, AZTEC ACE), #12 (ALPHA FLIGHT) or #21 (NEW MUTANTS) is cause for a "special" double issue; and where First, Eclipse and, by virtue of the plethora of their "limited series," Marvel, have raised their prices. I'd like to see you survive.

(2) Get **T. M. Maple** to interview **Barry Dutter** and **Amy Sacks** on the Great She-Hulk Controversy and drive it from "Last Word" once and for all.

The scene in TOOLBOX MURDERS that **Kelly Nichols** describes was recently shown on SIXTY MINUTES — not in its entirety, of course, but enough for one to get a good idea what was going on — in a piece on Minneapolis' proposed ban on pornography by civil law. The city council passed the law by one vote, but it was vetoed by the mayor, citing First Amendment freedom of speech. The film clip itself gave me the creeps.

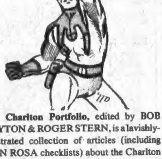
Good luck on continuing to put out the best comics-related magazine in the market. I'm looking forward to the interview **Mitch Cohn** is doing with **Fred Hembeck.**

Roger Green
264 Western Avenue #2
Albany, New York 12203

It's an interview well worth waiting for, Roger... and which will be appearing at long last in a near-future issue of COMICS INTERVIEW. And, speaking of future issues, this is a good time to segue into what's coming up next month (see you then)!

—DAK

BYRNE & DITKO



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